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BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE.

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No. MCCCXCII. OCTOBER 1931. Vol. CCXXX.

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BLACKWOOD'S MAGAZINE.

No. MCCCXCII. OCTOBER 1931. Vol. CCXXX.

THE TIN STREAMERS OF PUKET.

BY H. W. S.

I.

"Glad you've come," said Captain Webber, grasping my hand. "Things are beginning to hum, and we are a bit short-handed in Tongkah at the moment."

I stood and looked about me as one does on landing at a new place. All around broken granite gravel lay about; old mine-tailings, dumps and water-races made hills and valleys on which patches of bracken grew. Felspar and mica crystals shone in the sunlight, and in the heat a strong smell of decomposing iron-pyrites pervaded everything. Broken bits of timber head-gears, leats and Chinese pumps lay about. The very basin in which the boat lay was an old mine excavation. Behind were feathery cocoa-nut palms backed by green jungled hills and the towering peak of Puket. Above, a hot and brassy sky glared down.

Nai Suk and the rest of my party emerged from a police sampan which had followed us in, and Rover gambolled round like a mad puppy when he felt the dry land under his paws.

In the roadstead three long blasts proclaimed that the Penang steamer was getting under way again.

The Malay coxswain passed up my kit, which was grasped by a couple of small wiry Siamese policemen, who disappeared with it up the road.

"You'll stay up at my place," the Captain went on, "and your men can go in the old police barracks by the Harbour Master's office—we shall want all the men we can get by the look of it before long."

Nice news this for a harmless official of a Scientific Department of State, who had come on a strictly peaceable mission connected with mining leases and tin exports! My pleasure at meeting my warm-hearted host, after a long and somewhat adventurous journey of some months' duration from Bangkok, was, I fear, considerably dashed.

My personal predilection was always not to look for trouble, but to get on with the job and finish my reports for Government with the least possible amount of unpleasantness or needless adventure.

To my brief inquiry as to the meaning of his rather ominous greeting he returned only short jerky sentences.

"We are having a council of war after supper, you'll get the hang of it then." "Damn these Chinese Kongsis, that's what I say." "They've ruled the place too long." "Government's afraid of the brutes." "No force to whack 'em with—that's what they want—good whacking." "What's the use of fifteen Sikhs seven feet long, about as useful as signposts, and thirty little Siamese four feet high, like a lot of lap-dogs."

"Well, from what I've seen of them," I said as cheerfully as I could, "the lap-dogs seem able to bark and even to bite sometimes."

"Think so? Run round after their own tails or get their noses in the rice-pot—that's their only exercise. Well, we'll try them out soon anyhow," with which lugubrious prophecy we reached his house and were welcomed by Mrs Webber, one of those staunch women who, although in love with their own far distant land, make homes bright and sweet for their husbands and their stray visitors in all the corners of the earth and say little about it.

After an excellent supper, very delicious after our recent fare at sea, we adjourned to the office, where I was introduced to a stout pleasant-looking Chinaman called Tong Long, the head of the Customs, and to a clean, smart-looking, young Siamese by name Nai Klueh, who was some relation of the Rajah. Then in came Luang Sarididhi, a very important Siamese gentleman, who was the official representative of the Rajah. The latter, I heard, had gone up-country to Bangkok for some conference with the Minister of the Interior. Consequently Luang Sarididhi was the embodiment for the time being of all the majesty of the Government of the King of Siam. He seemed fully aware of the importance of impressing this fact on everybody—reminding me not a little, in fact, of some excellent Whitehall officials whom I knew; but there the similarity ceased, as he seemed to be neither extremely competent nor undeniably clever.

Next there entered a tall Dane, Lieutenant Andersen, in charge of the 'garrison,' which consisted of seventy-five Siamese marines. He looked round gloomily, but brightened up a bit when he saw a new face. He had been shot at by one of his own men the previous week, but knocked him down and arrested him with his own hands—his men, even when ordered to do so, not moving a step to help. His present preoccupation was due to the fact that a number of his fowls were disappearing every night, whether on account of a cobra or a human marauder he had not yet ascertained. His unsuccessful nightly vigils with his gun had apparently told somewhat on his nerves.

Nai Suk, my ever faithful assistant, arrived last with an apology for being late, but he had, I knew, been doing a little quiet investigation of the general position of affairs on his own. He was a slightly built young Siamese of good family, and as tough as you please; a good rider, a good shot and a good friend. Being a lieutenant in the Reserve Engineer Corps, and a surveyor, he was of great use on our journeys, and his invariable good humour, his cheerfulness to all whom we met, and his inimitable faculty for singing ravishing Siamese love-songs, or telling exciting stories with every variety of gesture and imitative action, made him absolutely invaluable in camp, or village, or on the march.

"Now, Tong Long, you are our Intelligence Department. Will you tell us the latest news? Are there any fresh developments to-day?"

"Nothing very much," said Tong Long. "Both parties continue to arm, and more men are going up from the town—you must stop them, Kapitan; your police must act. Things are getting dangerous."

"My good sir," replied Captain Webber, "how are my few men to police the whole of these valleys? The Chinese go round through all the workings; there's not a soul on the main roads. My Sikh sergeant up at Tapting says the roads are dead; there is no traffic whatever."

"May I ask," I interjected, "whether the two sides, whoever they are, cannot be allowed to fight it out quietly on their own up in the hills if they are so minded?"

Captain Webber laughed good-humouredly. "He doesn't understand," said he apologetically to the Chinaman and the others. Then turning to me he said with emphasis, "Because, unfortunately, the fight, once it begins, will involve about 20,000 Chinese coolies, who are in two camps on this affair, and may involve the town in a devastating flood from the reservoirs of the hill workings. After which, like as not, it will be sacked by the victorious party. It is a water right dispute which has come to a head in the last month."

"Well, if it's a water right dispute, there is generally a right and a wrong in such cases. Cannot you get them to agree to arbitrate—shove me, or someone, in as arbitrator as representing the Government? Over a general pow-wow tempers may improve. Reasonableness may prevail."

"Oh!" said Tong Long, "they would never agree to a *farang* arbitrating."

"Well, what about Nai Suk here?" said I; "we'll dress him up in his uniform, and put him on a high enough chair, and he will look the part and do it in first-class style too."

"You've got the English delusion that human beings are reasonable creatures," said Captain Webber. "In most cases they are nothing of the sort, my dear sir. There's not a hope as long as this Cantonese fellow, Fang Soo Choo, is in it. He's out to fight, and fight he will. What say you, Tong Long?"

Now everyone will tell you that a Chinaman's face is inscrutable and that no European can read a Chinaman's thoughts from the expression of his face. There is a lot of truth in that, but a Chinaman's manner and the narrowing of his eyes can convey a mighty lot on occasion.

I looked at Tong Long, who was in the full light of the lamp, and I saw him commence to move his lips as if to speak and then stop; his eyes narrowed and his hands under the table fidgeted.

"Oh! I don't know, Kapitan," he said; "he is a newcomer, a very good man; he would not do wrong. Now those Tapting men——"

At this point the practical Nai Suk leant forward to Captain Webber and said, "If that is your opinion of this Cantonese, sir, why not catch *him*—remove him—eh, sir?"

I was watching Tong Long. He turned a startled little eye on Nai Suk, drew in his breath sharply and said nothing.

"By Gaw! Yes!" snapped Andersen.

"But how?" said Webber.

"Well—I'm not a police officer," said Nai Suk blandly —"that is for you to say, sir."

Captain Webber got up and walked to the window and threw out the end of his cheroot. Turning round he slowly drew out and lit another, and puffed quietly, watching the smoke as it rose in the still hot air.

"Tong Long," he said at last, "I will arrange with my friend, Lieutenant Andersen here, to get the largest force we can spare up to the cross-roads to-morrow." He looked round at the young Dane with a slight lift of the eyebrow as much as to say, "All right? eh?" "Now, Tong Long, you try and keep the peace again. Tell them anything you like—say that the *Coronation* (the local gunboat) will be back in a day or two crammed full of soldiers—though we all know it will be weeks before she gets here—and that here is a Mining Commissioner arrived for the very purpose of settling all disputes. He and I will be up at the Tang Ting workings to-morrow. If Fang Soo Choo attacks, or his men cut a single one of the water-leats, he is for it. As it is I shall arrest him if I can, but do not say a word as to that or I shall never be able to get him. Well—we cannot do more to-night."

Tong Long and the others got up to go. We stood out in the compound and watched them depart towards the native town. On our right front the great Peak of Puket stood dark against the star-lit heavens, over a thousand feet above our heads.

From our left came the murmurs and peculiar smell of an Eastern town where Chinese live in thousands with their opium dens, their buffalo and their pigs.

"There is one other thing you can do to-night," I said to Captain Webber, "and that is make up your mind that Tong Long is in with Mr Fang Soo Choo, whoever he may be."

He turned sharp round. "Think so ?"

"Certain of it," I said.

"But Tong Long is a decent fellow."

"Oh, decent enough, I dare say—but secret societies overcome all decencies ; you know that. I bet you Tong Long is a Cantonese himself and both belong to the same society, and Tong Long is in with that fellow whether he likes it or not. He'll warn him, you'll see."

"What makes you think it ?"

"Did you watch him when you spoke of Fang Soo Choo and when Nai Suk suggested his being collared and removed ? *I* did."

"Gosh, now I think of it—believe you're right—maybe," he added doubtingly.

"In all your plans you've got to reckon on that. Good night," said I.

I went off wearily to turn in. I had hoped for a pleasant respite on getting ashore after our long journeyings, and here we were precipitated into some infernal Chinese row, with endless possibilities and unpleasantnesses awaiting us round every corner.

I was called at 5 A.M. and after a cup of coffee went outside. Two elephants swung their trunks and made low rumbling noises together under the cocoa-nut palms on the right. In the foreground were two fine little Deli ponies. Captain Webber came briskly out. "Morning—all ready, eh ? That's your pony—his name is Yakob, quiet as a dancing dervish. If he hears the click of a stick he's off—learnt his polo in Selangor, where I bought him ; he has no real vice in him."

I approached Yakob with the boldest mien I could assume, but with inward misgivings. These Deli ponies have a way of rolling the white of their eye at you, and then either rearing on their hind-legs or turning round with inconceivable agility and kicking you in the face before you realise it. I pronounced his name in my most engaging voice and held out a hand. Curiosity overcoming his other instincts, he nuzzled his soft nose into it and there found a little ball of brown cane sugar. Bribery and corruption, you may say. But thereafter peace was signed between me and Yakob.

The elephants were to follow on with Nai Suk and our men and breakfast.

"Always go with as much state as you can on these occasions," explained Captain Webber. Then looking at Rover, who came dancing round wagging his great tail defiantly—

"Here, where d'you get that dog? Looks like a cross between a bear and a tiger. You can't take him; we shall have all the buffalo of Tongkah at our heels. Besides, the Chinese coolies will kill him if they get the chance—they hate strange dogs."

"Not a bit of it," I said. "He understands buffalo down to their hoofs, and is half Tibetan and knows exactly how to treat all Chinamen." So Rover came as he always did.

We walked our ponies for the first mile or two to get clear of the town, the rising sun hitting hot on our backs. On our right the great Peak stood with his head in a gathering cloud.

"Thunder-storm brewing; too hot to last," said Captain Webber, glancing up at the sky. He then proceeded to give me the main outline of the situation in his usual staccato manner. He had served his time at sea and commanded a barque registered in Penang for many years, until he had retired on being offered the posts of Chief of Police and Harbour Master by the Rajah of Puket, who met him in Penang. It was the sort of shore billet which suited his active temperament and he had made a great success of his job. Reduction of revenue, due to diminishing tin exports, had reduced his command during the last few years, and his maintenance of law and order was due rather to his personal influence and reputation than to the strength of the force at his disposal.

He seldom wasted much breath.

"The Tang Ting mine lies on the west of the head of this valley. The Tang Tow workings higher up have threatened to cut the Tang Ting water leats. The Tang Ting people have threatened in return to breach the dam of the Tang Tows. The whole quarrel originated, I believe, in some secret society feud. The Tang Tow people are Cantonese and the Tang Ting are Fukien men. Friction began a few months since, but the trouble only came to a head a month ago after the arrival at the Tang Tow mine of this Fang Soo Choo from Canton. He is a stranger here. He knows nothing of mines, of our customs, or of the local regulations, and he cares less. But he's after satisfying some object of his own in this affair—and he has been all through the town and the town diggings recruiting men and talking in all the Kongsis."

"You must lay him by the heels."

"But how? He has a bodyguard of Canton blackguards as big as my whole force and Andersen's put together. I couldn't get any evidence against him if I bribed the whole community. He is never to be seen except among his own lot. No; it's the deuce of a proposition. He is set on a fight, and it will be a massacre. His people have got a lot of firearms in lately, I suspect by junk from Batavia or somewhere. There's a big junk has been hanging about among the islands for weeks."

We were riding up the Naitu road towards the foot of the hills. Once clear of the town we cantered leisurely up the wide fan-shaped stream-bed, now almost dry, where, when the rains are on and all the hill mines are working and washing tin-ore full blast, the stream rushes down spreading out gradually and depositing its granite débris all across the valley. We slowed down as we approached the hills, and Nai Suk came cantering up behind on one of the Rajah's ponies.

"I've been in the town," he said; "they all say there that this fellow Fang Soo Choo is going to cut the leats to-morrow at daylight. There is a regular panic on. The Tang Ting people have got the coolies out of the Sitam mines to come and help them—all work has stopped there. Your Kapam police have all come over to this side, sir."

"Good," said Captain Webber. "I told them to come over if the Sitam workings were abandoned. I think, like you, that Nai Suk is right; we must try and get hold of Fang Soo Choo, and with the Kapam men over here and with Andersen's men, whom I arranged for him to take up to the back of the Tang Tow mines before daybreak, we must try and rush him to-day if he will not listen to reason. He won't expect any move on our part to-day—it's now or never."

"Unless Tong Long has told him of our conversation last night, which I bet he has," said I.

"The devil! Well, we'll leave our ponies here and climb up to the Tang Ting Kongsi and see their leaders. Then I shall go on to Tang Tow and see how the land lies. Nai Suk with his men will wait here and keep the elephants and any police party which may be coming up."

We left our ponies with Rover. Nai Suk started looking about for good ground in which to conceal his animals and men until we should bring or send further instructions. We climbed the hill among patches of jungle to where great white rock-faces and red gashes in the hills showed where the patient work of the tin streamers had cut great fissures in the hillsides, some of them eighty to ninety feet in height. The streams along the bottoms far down were running low at this time of year before the rainy season, and most of the work now going on—or which ought to have been going on—consisted in clearing overburden and making up the water-courses and leats for washing the decomposed granite which contains the tin into the sluices below.

At the top of a slope of grassland with dark jungle behind it stood the thatched Kongsi of the Tang Ting working. Here a number of Chinese stood and sat about as if expectant, looking out vacantly at the panorama of mountain, valley and wooded slopes leading down to the distant town with its patches of palms and gardens lying under the Peak. Beyond lay the high line of the sea, dotted with distant islets.

The groups moved aside as Captain Webber walked quickly forward. We were ushered into the cool of the Kongsi under a wide thatched roof, and here the headmen sat smoking long pipes. Captain Webber was treated with great respect by all, and his coming seemed to cause keen satisfaction. A long talk took place in Chinese, which I could not understand. At last a decision was evidently come to; there was a great deal of nodding of heads, "Ah's" and "Yah's," and he turned to me and said—

"Will you go on down to the ponies? I am going up to Tang Tow. These people have got a lot of good rockets—imported with the last lot of new-year fireworks. They will open with a feint attack on the lower Tang Tow Dam in the Big Working at noon, with rockets and a big force of men. I shall hope to empty the Tang Tow men downhill to save their dam. After the alarm the Tang Ting men will draw off into the jungle to avoid trouble. Lieutenant Andersen and his men must rush the Tang Tow Kongsi at ten minutes after the first rocket discharge. I hope to collar Fang Soo Choo then, when he will be more or less alone. Send Nai Pluk, the police orderly who came up with the elephants, post-haste to Lieutenant Andersen. He will know where to find him at the Mueng Len behind Tang Tow. Is that clear? Got it? Good. You'll have time for some breakfast before anything happens. Wait for me with the horses. After that we must act as required."

I jumped up and started down the hill. As I emerged a tremendous clap of thunder broke over the hills behind, and the roar of the storm came echoing all along the jungled ridges. I ploughed my way down, hoping I was going the right way. Endless tracks, paths, water-ways and the excavations of mine workings crossed my path, but at last I reached the roadway at the bottom. Not a sign of man, horse or elephant! I stood in confusion. Then came a shout from behind a patch of wild banana on my left. It was Nai Suk on the look-out. I ran in and deposited myself in a heap in one of the elephant howdahs standing on the ground just as the first burst of rushing rain began. He and his men were well hidden.

I gave him our instructions, and Nai Pluk was sent off through the storm to find Andersen and his party. Sân, the cook, had got a fire going inside an old buffalo stable and we did ample justice to a stout meal. I must say I admired the way Captain Webber went off irrespective of meals. After turning out at daybreak I always felt done in about 11 A.M. if I could not get something to encourage the inner man. The storm passed away gradually to the north, leaving a stifling atmosphere in our hollow, and the mosquitoes were at their worst.

About noon we stood to, with ponies saddled and elephants with the howdahs up. Presently on the still hot air came the long weird moan of a rocket, then another and several loud detonations—probably dynamite blasts to liven things up—which echoed round the heights above us.

As we waited impatiently we caught sight of something moving fast down the mine road on the far side of the valley. With my glasses I made it out to be a couple of buffalo tin-carts with roofs on the top of their high sides, going at what looked like a break-neck speed for buffalo.

The unwilling thought struck me, "I bet that's Fang Soo Choo and that he has got away from Webber and is making for the town."

At last our police scout up the road came running in. "The Kapitan Korab!" And next moment Captain Webber stumbled by on the road. We ran out, leading the ponies.

"Sharp's the word," he panted. "Gallop for the Tang Tow go-down—that chap suspected something—the moment the alarm began he went out with the others to go to the dams—and then he bolted!"

"Been warned, I bet," said I.

We were off as hard as we could go, Rover barking with delight; but he soon had to save his breath to keep up with us.

"Watch out for these loose stones!" shouted Captain Webber as his pony stumbled. We kept right so as to enter the town at the north-west end by the Naitu road. We clattered through some lovely villages surrounded with pineapple and cocoa-nut plantations; the road through them was now deep in mud and filth after the heavy storm. We drew rein and trotted into the main street at a more moderate speed. All the shops seemed to be shut and barricaded. Parties of Chinese coolies were hurrying here and there, but otherwise the place seemed deserted. We passed the police station at this end of the town, called out the Sikh sergeant and his men and picked up a couple of Siamese police on patrol duty. Turning sharp up a side street full of standing tin-carts and sleeping buffalo, we reached the long walls of the go-down of the Tang Tow mine. Under an ornamental gateway we stopped, and Captain Webber jumped down and banged the door.

"I shall make a search here. There's another entrance I believe round that corner," he called; "go and hold that."

Nai Suk and I pushed our ponies on and turned into a narrow lane, calling to the two Siamese to follow. Here we waited.

Not a soul was to be seen, but the hum of many voices came to us over the high walls.

"Many Chinamen in there," said the Siamese policeman. "If they come out—puff—we go like that."

No, I did not feel over brave myself sitting there with Nai Suk and two men to hold a doorway with a big crowd of Cantonese inside. We were without any arms but my hunting-crop. That useful article I always carried for keeping off the attacks of the ubiquitous packs of pariah dogs. Nai Suk had a riding-whip and the two little Siamese a truncheon apiece. Really Rover was the best armed of the lot. Still, if Nai Suk and his little men on foot could smile and smoke cigarettes, it was up to me to light a cheroot myself.

We took rapid stock of our surroundings, the long high wall of the go-down courtyard, the long muddy lane; on the far side rows of small Chinese houses white-washed and splashed with mud, here and there the bamboo palings of fruit gardens; on this side long walls of tin-ore sheds, smelting houses and go-downs, with narrow lanes between, coming up from the town.

The noise of loud talk inside the Tang Tow walls increased, rose and fell, and broke out again. Nai Suk sent one of the orderlies to look down the lane we had come up by. He quickly returned. "The Kapitan has gone in; the Sikhi police remain outside—there is much talk," he reported.

Suddenly bars inside our gate were removed; it opened a foot or two, and three or four yellow faces peered through on us. We got a glimpse of a sea of yellow heads inside. The gate shut again with a bang and the bars were replaced. Then came a deal of noise; Yakob became impatient and excited, Rover was sniffing along the door and growling angrily. We smoked.

There came a crescendo of noise behind the gate. Rover jumped back to the upper side of the gate as it began to open—wider and wider.

"Qwai! Qwai!" (buffalo!) shouted the two police orderlies, jumping back and making off down the lane. I saw the enormous black horns of a vast buffalo tossing in the gate. Hundreds of sticks beat on him, hundreds of voices yelled, blood flowed from his hide and nostrils. Infuriated and maddened he came ploughing through the gateway into the lane, and behind him came another, and then a roaring crowd of men.

Nai Suk took in the position before I did. "Quick!" was all he shouted. "Look out for the buffalo!" and he was off. No draught animal is so tame as the Asiatic water-buffalo when inspanned and under the hand of his native master. None is so dangerous when loose and angered. It was a smart idea to turn their buffalo on us to lead the sortie and clear the lane. I will say this for Yakob, that in spite of the noise and his natural terror of buffalo, he stood his ground for one moment; and then he wheeled and was after Nai Suk with a spring in his hoofs that bespoke exceeding fear. I had little to say in the matter. I couldn't have stopped him if I had wished, and I did not wish. I let him go.

I glanced down the lane we had come up by as we flashed past it. Only a seething crowd there. What had happened to the captain and his men? And what of Rover? In the din behind I thought I heard his bark. Was it possible for him in this narrow mud-cramped place to get clear of those terrific horns and of the mad crowd behind?

We passed another lane on the left—a glimpse showed crowds of blue-clad Chinese in the main road below. We were galloping straight for the harbour end of the town, where the police and Customs quarters were. This was unquestionably the only place where we could expect to rally and to hold out against this mob.

Suddenly I saw Nai Suk pulling wildly at his pony's head. In front the lane ended against a pile of old mine-tailings. He swerved down to the left, and I saw I must get Yakob to follow or we should be caught in the mine dump to a certainty. I think Yakob saw the danger too, for he went round that corner like a rocket hitting an obstruction. There was a bullock waggon right across the lane, but Yakob went neatly over the shafts. Ahead the main road seemed empty; astern a terrific crash occurred; and looking round I saw two mad buffalo tearing, stamping and tossing the inoffensive bullock waggon into a thousand pieces. And then out from under their very heels came Rover, all of a lather but quite pleased with himself.

With soothing words and much stroking of his hard, little, arched neck I got Yakob to ease down. He broke into a walk. In a few moments we were in the main street of the town. And there, looking up the main road in the direction we had come from, I saw stretched across that wide space a dozen quiet tall men standing smiling and impassive, leaning on their carbines, and fifty yards in front of them a dense throng of yelling gesticulating savages in loose, wide, blue trousers, brandishing all kinds of weapons and screaming themselves hoarse with fury, with horrible blood lust in their eyes—but all holding back, unwilling to advance. I have seen the same sight since then, but it always makes the blood tingle—that old story of discipline, loyalty and confidence ranged against the madness and savagery of mob movements.

Behind the thin Sikh line sat Captain Webber on his pony, quite unperturbed but with a firm look about his mouth.

He turned in the saddle on hearing the beat of our hoofs on the stones.

"Well done," he said. "I stood here hoping for you—it was just weight of numbers—four of my men are cut off, but I think they've got in somewhere. We've lost our bird again; he's got away; we must retire on the Customs building. Nai Suk! ride full speed over to the cross-road at the bottom. My Kapam men ought to be there by now—bring them over quick—we are not strong enough to retire with this lot. If we move now we shall be rushed."

Off went Nai Suk amid renewed shrieks of Chinese invective.

"I'll go forward and try to speak to them: it may gain time for us. They are all right if I could only make 'em laugh," said Captain Webber as he walked his horse forward. I couldn't leave him, of course, the only other mounted man there, and so had to persuade Yakob to walk quietly through our thin line of Sikhs right up to the yelling mob. Rover came too.

I really could not help thinking how ridiculous the position was. The most retiring and unpugnacious person ever turned out plumped into the midst of the foulest kind of riot, spending my time trying to kidnap a probably respectable-looking old Chinese merchant, galloping ignominiously in full flight from a few erstwhile somnolent buffalo, and now enduring the unpleasant sight, smell and sound, in close propinquity, of some thousand generally peaceful Chinese coolies, now apparently raving lunatics; and for what and why?

At this moment a new personage arrived on the scene. A very small, naked, Chinese boy with a long pigtail rolled out in front of the line from among the howling crowd of coolies. He sat there with his thumb in his mouth. He looked up at the long front line of his yelling compatriots, uncles and cousins, and then at Rover. Rover, who was sitting down with his tongue out, wagged his tail. The little yellow creature considered Rover for some time, then held out a hand and called.

Rover, thinking the moment had arrived to take a hand—or paw—in the game, thumped his tail, looked up at me as if for permission to parley with the enemy, and deliberately walked up to the little Chinese boy and licked his face. He then sat down and held up a big white paw, as was his way.

"Damn it all, look at that infernal dog of yours," said Captain Webber.

The front line of coolies was looking too—those at the outer ends of the line and those behind craned their necks to see what it was that interested us. And then a laugh broke out along all that fierce line of angry men. The shouting stopped; its place was taken by a huge, hearty, wholesome roar of laughter. Captain Webber pulled out his cigarette-case and lit up. Some of the coolies held out their hands; he threw the contents of his case at them. There was much laughter and a scramble—the front rows began to break and turn back through the crowd, talking and laughing as they went. Where had the leaders got to? As so often when confronted with some determined men, they had vanished. The crowd began to move—to break up into the side streets—away, laughing and gesticulating, in all directions save that in which our little line still stood.

Rover and the little boy still played, and a great Chinese coolie squatted beside them and lit a long bamboo pipe. Captain Webber jumped off his pony and spoke to the man.

"He is the youngster's father," he explained. "I tell him his boy and that dog have saved many broken heads today—I must get some sweets for the kid. Now, then, sergeant, march your men up the road and find those others. Your two Siamese who were with you will be up in the hillside safe enough."

We turned to ride down the road.

"Our man's gone all right," said Webber in a low tone. "He wasn't in the go-down at all; but he'd got nearly a thousand men in there who were all to go up to the mine tonight had we not anticipated him with our little plot up there at noon to-day. Mischief is, I don't know where to look for the blackguard now."

"In my opinion try the Custom House," I said.

At this point we met Nai Suk coming up with the Kapam reinforcement. I never saw anyone look so surprised as he when he found us walking our horses quietly down the street.

"All right," laughed Captain Webber, "that show is over—thanks to that Tibetan cur of yours. Now we'll just try the Customs, but I must not allow Tong Long to think I suspect him. Sergeant!" he called, "get your men all round the Custom House at once—don't let anyone in or out—or *out*, remember. Say you have come to protect the buildings. Sharp now; double down!"

We trotted round to the Residency of the Chao Muang (the Rajah) first.

"Luang Sarididhi will be in a terrible state if we don't look in there and report how things are," said the Captain.

Luang Sarididhi kept us, cross-questioning us about endless small points which did not matter at all. He wanted more guards at the Residency, though Captain Webber plainly told him that there would be no more rioting and that the leaders of the Cantonese had apparently bolted. We left him full of importance and the victim of his own fears.

On reaching the Custom House we found it surrounded by police and the clerks inside, mostly Chinese, in a great state of alarm. We jumped off our ponies and walked straight into Tong Long's room, nominally to explain the situation, in reality to try to find out anything we could about the movements of the elusive Fang Soo Choo, and half hoping we might find him here.

No luck! Tong Long and a head clerk only. Both looking a little perturbed.

Captain Webber quickly recited the incidents of the day, and then said impressively—

"Tong Long, we have to find Mr Fang Soo Choo. I must see him. Can you assist me?"

"Who? I?" said Tong Long. "I am sure, Nai Kapitan, I can tell you nothing." His amiable face was a serene blank, but that little eye of his turned on me and on Nai Suk where we stood on one side of him, with the slightest squint of anxiety in it.

"Captain Webber," said I, "what about that junk you told me of hovering among the islands?" Tong Long's hands inside the wide sleeves of his Chinese jacket moved uneasily.

Captain Webber jumped up.

"Tong Long, you will not mind my looking through the building, will you? He might have come down here in the panic of this morning for shelter—without your knowing, you know."

Tong Long merely bowed with a polite smile.

We found nothing, of course, that remotely resembled the man we were after. The police were withdrawn on the grounds that all was now quiet in the town. Extra pickets were sent out to ensure the continuance of order and the resumption as soon as possible of the everyday business of the place. The Tang Ting people and other mine-holders were all pledged to the Captain to resume normal operations. We returned to the police lines and sat down in the Captain's office to discuss the events of the day and consider the next move.

"Tong Long knows more than he admits," said I.

"Yes," said the Captain, "I observed that!"

"Couldn't we, as a first step, find out," said Nai Suk over a cup of tea, "if any boats have left the harbour? If none have gone out, and if none go out to-night, we may narrow down the field of search."

"You're right, Nai Suk. Orderly! Send the coxswain here. He's the best man I've got," added the Captain to us. "As Harbour Master I ought to know, but as my assistant is one of Tong Long's men, I don't trust him too much on this occasion."

Before Captain Webber had

finished his tea, which he was attacking with good appetite, the coxswain arrived. The tea was removed and he was brought in. It appeared that three *tongkangs* (cargo boats) had gone out with the morning tide. They were going to cut firewood at Koh Khalom for the *Phra Muang*, Phya Trang's steam launch.

"What! When did she arrive?" asked the Captain.

"Last night after dark; was it not reported to the Kapitan? The *sarang*[1] sent in a letter asking for 2000 pieces of firewood as soon as possible."

"The Government told me before I left," said I, "that they would arrange for her to meet me here to take me to the mainland about the survey of those so-called coal concessions. Glad he's getting his fuel, anyhow!"

"She ought to have been reported—perhaps the report is over at my house," said the Captain. "Have any other boats gone out?"

"No, Korab, except a big Chinese *sampan* (or open boat) at nearly low water. They could hardly get out over the bar."

"Who were they? Fishermen?"

"It was the son of Fen Loo with his coolies; they had a *kadjang* over amidships. They hoisted sail outside. There was a man inside the *kadjang*. He looked out when they stuck on the bar and went in again."

"Good lord; it's him, I believe—got away. That junk, too—gosh! they're all part of the same game I do believe."

"Look here, Captain," said I, scenting fun in the air, "here's the *Phra Muang* arrived in the nick of time. She'll have her firewood on board in no time. What about a chase!"

Nai Suk, who loathed the sea, looked downcast. The Captain looked puzzled.

"What! Collar him on the high seas? Isn't that rank piracy? Besides, we don't know it's him—we've no evidence; and then, I can't leave my post and go to sea again!"

This thing appealed to me heartily.

"Give me your Siamese sergeant of police—I don't want a Sikh; I can't talk their lingo—and give me a warrant for Mr Fang Soo Choo's arrest and I'll get after him with the launch in a couple of hours."

"But," objected Nai Suk, quite truly as it seemed at the moment, "if he's gone, he's gone. Let him go! He can't do any more harm. You've done what you wanted and got rid of the main source of all your troubles—I say leave well alone."

Here I saw that Nai Suk's cold common-sense was going to kill my buccaneering plans. It was at this stage that the ever blessed Chow Pong Lee, one of the elders of the Fukien fraternity of Chinese in Tongkah, arrived and asked to see the Captain on important and urgent business. The Captain introduced him to us all, and after a polite bow our visitor stood silent with folded hands looking in front of him, apparently waiting to be left alone with the Captain. However, it was explained that we were Government officials and he could speak in front of us. Then it all came out in a torrent of Chinese, which I could not follow except from the Captain's exclamations and the expressions of his face. Shortly it amounted to this, that a relation of Chow Pong Lee's maternal uncle, who kept an opium shop in Ahwan Street, had reported to his wife, who had reported to the uncle, who had reported to his nephew, that that very afternoon, just after the excitement in the town had subsided, an old fisherman named Fen Loo had come into the opium shop, drunk with *samshu*, and had thrown down two hundred-dollar notes and asked for an opium pipe. He was very hilarious, and said the notes were what he had got for landing a very large fish; the very large fish had come from Canton and was afraid of being caught and fried by the Kapitan of Polit. He, Fen Loo, rather than allow such a catastrophe, had given up his sampan, the *Peng Suey*, which had gone to Krabi and was going down by the inland route to Trang, where there were scores of other big Canton fish.

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[1] *Sarang* = usually the native bo'sun or petty officer in charge of a small craft.

From this drunken jumble Chow Pong Lee had deduced certain possibilities. He had accordingly, being deeply interested in the conclusion he drew, visited the wife of fisherman Fen Loo while he was enjoying his opium-inspired visions uninterrupted, and from that lady ascertained that Fen Loo had chartered his boat with his son and two men to take three important persons across to Gerbi river, on the mainland, and thence by the inland water-ways along the coast as far as Trang; and they had left a few hours ago, after paying over 500 dollars to the highly gratified Fen Loo. The point that Chow Pong Lee now wished to emphasise was that, if the fugitive was none other than the great and elusive Fang Soo Choo, upon which none of us could now feel any doubt, it was obvious that, in going to Trang, he was up to further mischief, as that place was known to the Fukien men as the happy hunting-ground of the Cantonese and the headquarters of their strongest secret societies on this part of the Malay Coast. Chow Pong Lee regarded the future with serious misgivings and besought the Captain to take steps to stop or arrest the arch enemy Fang Soo Choo. He had his own junks on the coast, that they knew, and he would only come back with reinforcements which would be landed anywhere round the island and brought into the mines at any point and at his own time, and there would be no safety for anybody.

"Um," said the Captain at the end, "there's a good deal in what he says."

Here was a wholly new situation. Captain Webber got up and walked about.

"My offer holds, Captain," said I, looking at Nai Suk and chuckling at his discomfiture. He grinned and said, "Well, if I feel sure we shan't be long on the sea, and that we shall get to Trang, I don't mind."

"Well," said I, "we may not have to go so far; if we get away to-night we may catch our friends in the Gerbi river in the morning before they get into the side *klongs*. Have you the chart, Captain?"

The charts showed clearly and accurately the indentations, banks, islets and all the large islands of this remarkably cut-up coast; but the courses of the rivers, their entrances and the many *klongs*, or water-ways, which wind behind the sandy bays and connect river and river, creek and estuary, were only shown by dotted lines of the utmost vagueness, with extremely doubtful or non-existent soundings.

We should require local pilots for all the inland navigation, but above all it was doubtful if the *Phra Muang* did not draw too much water to make use of the inland water-ways.

"If we miss him at Gerbi," I said, "I will go by the sea route and be at Trang before him. Then with a letter from you to the Governor, and one from the Chow Muang's office, we ought to be able to get him nabbed by the Trang police on his arrival."

"Well," said the Captain after an interval, "if that is your plan, I think it is a good one. But suppose the Governor of Trang won't handle the affair, where are you then? After all, he has got to consider the Trang Kongsis. He can't offend them, you know; he gets three-quarters of his revenue from them. Then you'll have all the Canton Kongsis against you, if they get an inkling that you are up to any kidnapping schemes. Don't try that, or you will never get out of the place again. They are secret societies in more ways than one."

"I can't say till we get there. We can lie low and see how things turn out. I can always prowl round with a geological hammer and look innocent," said I; "and as for Nai Suk, he'll sing them some of his classical love songs."

The Captain suddenly sat down and called for his clerk. To Chow Pong Lee he said—

"All right: not a word to a soul. We will see what can be done."

To me he said, "Get your men and your gear ready. I will put you off in an hour."

To the coxswain he said, "Take a two-man canoe and go off to the *sarang* of the *Phra Muang*. Say we shall be off in an hour, and he must get steam up and all his firewood completed and stowed. The lighters must be anchored near him now—get them alongside. Haste!"

Going across to the house to put my kit together, get a bit of supper and say good-bye to kind Mrs Webber, I found a letter which had come in in the morning by the *Phra Muang* from the Governor of Trang as the result of an official communication sent to him from Bangkok. It was a very cordial invitation in the English language to use the little vessel for my inspection journeys up and down the coast, with the hope of seeing me at Trang in a month's time. For the present he would be away at Singora on the other side of the Peninsula, but if I should arrive before his return, Luang Banabatra would be acting for him and would give me every welcome. He specially commended to my notice the Malay *sarang* of the *Phra Muang*, who, he added, "is an old pirate from Celebes (of all places), who cannot stand the Dutch administration, and has been with me for the past five years. He speaks Siamese tolerably."

II.

Dark was approaching as we were paddled out in the long police gig to the roadstead where the *Phra Muang's* white hull and two tall spars swung gently as if hung on invisible ropes between sea and sky. Her riding light, and a light from a forward scuttle, came trembling and waving down a long pathway towards us. It was one of those peaceful tropic nights which one remembers—they are really so rare at sea!

Two or three high black-hulled *tongkangs* lay anchored a cable length from our ship. They had evidently discharged their loads of firewood.

The *sarang* awaited us at the gangway. The quiet dignity of the true Malay is always a refreshing thing to me after the babbling crowds of eastern ports. His crew were just running up the small gig to the davits; little men, singularly swift and silent.

We went below to stow our gear in the excellent saloon, and then, because it was very hot there, adjourned to the small wheel-house, where, with the chart on the table, I explained our plan of action.

The *sarang* nodded his head; steam was up; he was ready to proceed at any moment. We could make the mouth of Gerbi river by daylight round the southern end of Pulo Panjang. But he said there had been a fresh westerly wind all day which would have taken the *Peng Suey* a long way on her course. There was still wind outside, but he doubted whether they could make the river entrance before daylight, and at eight knots we ought to be there before that. It seemed a chance to take, and bidding Captain Webber farewell as he went over the side, we started to get up the anchor. We seemed to have known Captain Webber for months after the active hours we had spent in his company, and Nai Suk and I felt really sorry to leave him again so soon.

Swinging round we set a course to pass two miles south of the end of Pulo Panjang, after which we should haul up farther north for the entrance of the Gerbi river. The quiet throb of the engine, the rustle of the bow wave, the cool salt air were all marvellously restful after our hectic day ashore. The dark outlines of the embracing hills that form the bay receded into the night. The roll of the Indian Ocean began to give a new life and movement to the little ship, and soon we struck into the invigorating sea-wind blowing in towards the heated mainland heights with a strong and purposeful draught. The great dome of star-lit sky was clear except for a few wisps of cloud to the eastward over our bow, and where clouds, piled about the far summits of the ranges of the Peninsula, flashed silent messages of the coming rains which the whole world of nature was awaiting.

"There will be heavy rain with the day," said the *sarang* as he held the wheel and looked into the compass bowl, "and wind—the monsoon is not far off."

"What about the Gerbi river mouth if it blows?" said I.

"Very bad place, Tuan; shallow banks and lee shore," said he shortly.

Sleep was pressing on my eyes and brain.

"Call me if anything is seen," said I.

Down in the saloon Nai Suk was fast asleep in one of the bunks; Nai Dhow, his number two, was snoring on a settee. The boys no doubt were similarly engaged somewhere aft. I lay down on the settee, and Rover leapt up and curled at my feet as he always did in camp.

I was awakened, very soon it seemed, by a quiet voice.

"Tuan, Tuan, we have run our distance—but there is a heavy squall."

I tumbled up on deck rubbing my eyes. Seas were breaking round us in brilliant flashes of phosphorescence. We rolled along at half speed in a quartering sea. On the port hand a dim outline of land showed where the end of Pulo Panjang lay, but it was quickly blotted out in a stinging rain; a strong wind sang in the wire rigging. We altered course now for the Gerbi river mouth, which was only twenty miles distant. As there were no prominent marks, and the shoal water came off a long way, it would be dangerous to approach before daylight. Being now wide awake and refreshed by my short sleep, I began to work out to myself the probable whereabouts of the *Peng Suey*. With the fair wind yesterday, leaving Tongkah at 3 P.M. or thereabouts she should have been off Pula Panjang at 6 o'clock. Would she lie up under the lee of the island, or under the islands farther in, so as to make the Gerbi river entrance soon after there was light, or would she have tried to run in in the dark? No, they would certainly lie off somewhere; probably under the 'Thirteen Islands' in Gerbi Bay. In the latter case how would they fare in this squall? Anyhow, I did not like to approach Pulo Panjang to look for the boat in thick rain, even on the lee side, as some very nasty low rocks only two feet above high water lie off it and are very difficult to see even on a clear day, much more now when the sea was breaking all round and the rain obscured the distance in slanting sheets of grey mist.

In my own mind I could not understand the *Peng Suey* people having made for the Gerbi river instead of the Pakasi river entrance, which is some miles farther south and therefore opens into the inland water-ways farther on their course towards Trang. But on questioning the *sarang* he said the latter was much more exposed to the big ocean swell now running, and the bar runs farther out and is dangerous of approach. I lay down and had another sleep, and presently, aroused by a change in the beat of the engine, I went on deck again. The rain had stopped, but it was blowing hard; dawn was coming in a grey sky over a grey world. To windward the 'Thirteen Islands' broke the incoming sea, which came round their sides in a confused jumble which made our shelter uneasy at the best. As day broke we began to use the glasses on the Gerbi river entrance. The bar runs two miles out, and as we bore off, going dead slow, we got nine and ten feet with the lead right along. As we were drawing six feet and were not certain about depths, it was a bit jumpy work—in more ways than one—going in on an uncertain bearing for a river mouth which was concealed in a long featureless line of monotonous mangrove. Only Banana Point on our port hand gave some certainty to our course. At last the sea smoothed, the depths increased, and we got four fathoms. We turned in round 'Sand Island' and 'Rocky Point' into a wide deep river. On either side wide leads of water ran off through the mangrove to north and south. A short distance up and we anchored off the police station. Hasty inquiries here elicited the fact that nothing had been seen there that morning of any boats coming in, but a Siamese Malay who had been fishing inside the entrance declared that he had seen two Chinese sampans come in with the first dawn, one belonging to Ah Bee, who lived in the *klong* to the south; the other was unknown to him. Both had turned south through the *klong*, or waterway, to the Pakasi river. This meant that Fang Soo Choo had slipped ahead of us by a small margin. We might yet catch him where his course would cross the Pakasi river if we could get there in time.

It was up anchor for us and

away full speed. With the rising tide we went out over the bar with confidence and then turned south along the coast, stoking her up for the Pakasi river entrance.

This was undoubtedly much more open to the long swell of the Indian Ocean. As we put the helm over to run in on the bearings for the entrance of the river, big hollow seas rose up astern, rushing us along on their steep fronts and dropping us into the vast hollows.

I must say, looking out on the wild scene of breaking rollers ahead of us and now on either hand, I felt genuinely anxious. Even the *sarang* looked serious. It was worse than we had expected. As far as eye could see the great seas broke in long thunderous lines. One vast crest broke under us and seemed to hurry us forward at forty miles an hour. Her deep keel and two hands on the wheel prevented her broaching to. Sinking into the valleys we dreaded to feel her hit, and as she rose to the crest behind there was the possibility of being pooped. The little vessel ran true and straight, and gradually the crests sank away and we found the water deepening at last.

Shooting through the sand-spit at the entrance of the Pakasi we found ourselves in a fine broad estuary among endless lagoons and bays with islands here and there. A few small Malay fishing villages stood on the sandy and rocky spurs along the water. Were we in time? Bringing to, we sent away the gig; we made inquiries and were met with all the contradictory information which is usual in such cases, whether you are in the civilised west or in the wilds of the Far East. A very charming old Malay headman who came off with his two sons in a small dug-out, however, made it fairly clear that we were again too late, and stated that not long before he sighted us outside the bar a Chinese sampan had passed across under sail from the Gerbi river *klong* to the waterway on the south. Owing to shallows in the latter it would be impossible for the *Phra Muang* to follow, and I knew that our small gig was no match in speed for a sampan with the tall lug catching the wind over the mangroves, especially when it was blowing strong just on the beam; while if the pursuer got anywhere near, the pursued could always hide up close in a hundred sheltered spots.

It was maddening to have risked ourselves and our ship over this infernal bar for nothing. It was evident, however, that the quarry was in a panic of haste to get south at all hazards. To put ourselves in the gig behind him was to my mind the wrong tactics. To get ahead of him and cut him off was the only thing to do. As in yacht-racing "keep between your opponent and the mark" at all costs.

After a swift consultation with the Malay, his sons, Nai

Suk and the *sarang*, it was decided that the only course left was to put to sea again at once and steam down to Trang itself, to lie there if possible and prepare plans before the arrival of the *Peng Suey*.

It was 1.30 P.M. when we found ourselves safely outside that horrible bar, once more in deep water, thankful to be clear of the lee shore and those tremendous lines of angry breakers. We stood right away out in face of wind and sea until clear of Koh Luang under our lee, and we could alter course safely to S. 10° E. Once clear of the Vogel Islands the sea increased on the beam so that *Phra Muang* began to roll her scuppers down.

The long outline of Pulo Lantau lay on our port hand and the picturesque Pilgrim Isles steep on our starboard. Passing the southern end of the former one of those marvellous panoramas of the sea which are rare and ever memorable to those who see them greeted our eyes: the white limestone precipices along the mainland standing out in flashes of strong sunlight against lurid masses of dense rain clouds black with depth, their summits piling in vast cloud castles into the zenith. Below coursed the white-flecked shoulders of the long seas rolling on their ways towards the foam-fringed bays and islands of the coast. A solitary junk, reefed down, passed outside us.

In order to save time, as night was drawing in when we approached the Trang river entrance, we bore off to take the inside northern passage over the shallows on the east of Pulo Telebong. We slowed to half-speed and kept the lead going in two to three fathoms right through. As we got the protection of the land to windward of us we steamed silently through the dark. The look-out called to the helmsman in his long-vowelled musical Malay, "Kireee—Kirreee sicket! Lagaaar!" Then as we turned into the main river and worked up to full speed the helmsman began to drawl his "Ampat stengah."

It was a couple of miles below the new capital of Kontani that we had a surprise. There was a 'horse' or central sand-bank in the river at this point and the main channel lay on the port hand coming in. Just in its narrowest part as we approached, the look-out shouted in alarm, "A large junk right ahead!"

The *sarang* was himself at the wheel; he pulled the spokes over as I rang to stop. We slid close by under the tall sides of a big unlighted junk swinging to wind and tide to a single cable right in the centre of the narrow channel.

"What's he doing there?" said I.

The *sarang* shouted in angry tones. Against the sky-line we could see men on the high poop. Not a word was said to us. She was lightless and voiceless. We passed on.

"Tuan," said the *sarang* to me in a confidential tone, "that junk is one of those Hailam ships. I know them—the biggest lot of slit-your-throats in the sea of China. I would not go near them in a small junk. No good, no good!"

By 10.30 we were anchored off the lights of the new town of Kontani, lately established by the Rajah of Trang as the seaport of the province.

By daybreak we were up and doing. Discreet inquiries were made of the Customs and at the police about boats coming through from the Pakasi river. The entrance of the branch river was farther up-river towards the old capital, and the Customs people had a check on all boats coming out of this *klong*, as a large part of the *attap* (thatching) palm-leaf export came from these water-ways. To come through from the Pakasi river would take a day and a half, they said.

"We may expect the *Peng Suey* early this evening," said Nai Suk, rubbing his hands.

"And then what, my bold Lieutenant of Engineers? What do you propose then? How do you suggest we should catch our birds under the very alert eyes of the whole of the Secret Guilds of Trang?"

"Oh well, I am sure I don't know," he said, looking at me with an apologetic grin.

"Nor do I," said I; "we must watch out for our chance. That is all."

We sent a messenger ahead to the Governor's residence up beyond the new market, and walked leisurely to the place along one of the new raised roads built by the energetic Chinese Rajah, Simbee, as he was familiarly known, who had put the *Phra Muang* at our service. I knew he was unfortunately absent, but it was essential to see his *locum tenens* and feel our way in order to see what support we might expect in official circles if we were going to meet with trouble, and above all find out whether the Kongsis were in favour or otherwise at headquarters.

On arriving at the Residency we were ushered through the wide verandah into a long room in which the Acting Governor, Luang Parapomadiddhi Banabatra, was drinking cups of Chinese tea.

I gave him Captain Webber's letter, which he placed on the table before him, and then pulling out a pair of enormous Chinese horn-rimmed spectacles he began to read. He made an impatient sound, sat back, and looked away from where we sat.

"The Rajah is away. I cannot do anything until he returns," he said, as if he was dismissing an unwelcome deputation.

"If the Rajah is away," I said, "the Acting Rajah acts for him."

He pondered this for some time and then said—

"The Rajah cannot be responsible for every person who comes and goes in this Muang."

"No," I said, "but the Rajah has police who apprehend bad characters."

"What has this man done?"

"Does not your letter tell you?"

"It says 'on a charge of conspiracy.' What does that mean? If we should arrest every Chinaman for fancied conspiracy we should have to shut them all up. They all belong to some secret society."

"Quite so," I said, "and as long as they conspire and defraud or even poison one another peaceably and quickly without involving the community, nobody worries. But when it comes to stopping the normal life of the population, and capsizing the whole public law and order, it becomes necessary for someone to get moving, don't you think?"

The Acting Rajah evidently did not care for the turn the conversation had taken.

"Well, anyhow, I do not know if this man has arrived or not. What I will do is, I will introduce you to Teng Wai Chun, the Kapitan China, who is the head of the Guilds here. You can find out all you want to know from him."

He appeared to think that that would get rid of us and exonerate him from having to decide on any course of action.

"Yes, very good. And what then? When I have found out, let us say, that he has arrived, shall you take action in the matter? Will you order his arrest?"

"I do not know. I shall see."

"I ask because if you do not, I shall," I said.

"Are you a police officer?" asked Luang Parapom, looking sharply in my direction for the first time. "I shall allow no arrests of people in the Muang without a warrant."

"I have a police officer with me and a warrant from the Chief Commissioner of Puket; also two officers of the Royal Reserve." The last item was entirely beside the point, of course, as they had no police authority whatever, but I thought it added to the general effect.

"My police will take no notice of such authority. The Muang is not under Puket."

"Does not the Royal Warrant run in Muang Trang?" I asked. I knew I was on delicate ground here, as formerly the authority of the Central Government had been extremely shadowy, but a recent Royal Commission had caused the Royal claims to be more strictly enforced in the Peninsula states. So I turned the subject. "Will you oblige me with the note to the Kapitan China which you so kindly promised?"

He clapped his hands and a Chinese clerk came silently in. He wrote downwards on a pad with his neat Chinese brush to the dictation of his chief and then the latter placed his seal upon it.

"Will you object to reading what you have been so very kind as to write?" said I.

He read out the document in

Chinese and translated each sentence into Siamese. Most of it consisted of very florid introductory passages of greetings. "To the honourable Teng Wai Chun, Kapitan China, at Muang Kontani, &c., &c., from Khoon Luang Parapomadiddhi Banabatra Acting-Rajah," &c., &c.—followed by a short and dry introduction of myself as an official from Bangkok who had come to look after the mines.

After due acknowledgments on our part, Nai Suk and I walked off, determined to call on the Kapitan China as soon as possible.

"I hope that is really all he put in his letter," said I. "One thing is clear, the Luang Parapom is heartily scared of the Kapitan China and all the guilds here. We cannot rely on him even in emergency."

"No; but he has just said the right thing in that letter. He has played our game without knowing it. He was not going to mention our manhunt. It might commit him. He is in with the Kongsis. What shall you say to the Kapitan China, sir?"

"Well, we will talk vaguely of mines, and the new capital at Kontani, and of pepper export and prices, and European politics, 'cabbages and kings'; anything; and then act 'as requisite'!"

We inquired of a Siamese-Malay at the Police Station in the new market and ascertained to our consternation that the Kapitan China and all the important guilds resided at the old capital some miles up-river. We hastened back to the *Phra Muang* and discussed matters with the *sarang*. He knew the river well, of course, as it was his home port, and going up with the tide, which was still flowing, he said, we could lie in 8 feet least water off the old capital. By nine o'clock, therefore, we were under way again, and going carefully at half speed. In an hour and a half we found ourselves off the wharf at Kam Dam, the landing-place of the old Muang Kontani.

We at once sent a messenger with the Acting Governor's letter to the Kapitan China, and in less than an hour a most polite young gentleman, who drove down in a very smart pony-trap, came on board and offered us a very hearty welcome from the Kapitan, inviting me and my two officers to a grand lunch at the Guild which was to commence two hours after noon and which was being given in honour of the Kapitan's birthday. We could not refuse such an invitation. It was rare indeed for any European to gain access to one of these guilds, and I was most anxious not to allow the opportunity to slip of seeing these men at close quarters and getting to know what they were really like and what the actual strength of the guilds might be. But we none of us looked forward to the greasy Chinese fare and the intolerable length of such entertainments.

Arrangements were completed

for getting 2000 pieces of firewood on board, and steam up, before sunset. If Fang Soo Choo and his party in the sampan *Peng Suey* arrived this evening and came up to gain the shelter of the Guild, as I had little doubt they intended to do, we must be ready to move at any hour. On the other hand, there was the possibility that the big Hailam junk lying in the lower river, which we had passed in the night, was his, and that he would turn down-river and go straight on board her with the intention of getting away to sea. This possibility complicated the problem for us, and we had to prepare for either eventuality.

I discussed the position with the *sarang*, Nai Suk and Nai Dhow. We dismissed the third alternative, of waiting at the mouth of the *klong* leading into the Trang river from the north, for the simple reason that there were several entrances from the northern water-ways and we could not watch them all.

"If Feng Soo Choo in the *Peng Suey* does not come up by 10 P.M. we will get under way and steam down and anchor alongside the junk. She won't be able to train her carronades on us, or to get under way in the narrow channel and beat out against the on-shore wind, if we are anchored close to windward of her. We can watch her and run aboard her if necessary at any time we may choose."

"Tuan," said the *sarang*, "with the flood-tide against them, when they reach this river after sunset, and with the strong sea-wind to beat against, they will not, in my opinion, try to make the junk to-night. They will make a fair wind and tide of it, and run up from the mouth of the *klong* and make for the Kongsi. That sampan-boat could never work down against the wind and the flood-tide to-night."

"I believe you are right," said I. "Well, anyhow, we must make ready to accommodate them on board here. Nai Suk, will you get all our kit out of the saloon, lock all doors below, remove anything that can be used as a weapon, get the lamps out. *Sarang*, get your engineer to screw up those scuttles so that they cannot be moved and put a hand over the side with a pot of white paint and paint over the glass on the outside so that they shan't see through. See, *sarang?* And get a tarpaulin lashed over the skylight."

I felt uneasy about leaving the ship and going ashore lest our quarry should arrive before we could leave the banquet. But the *sarang* reassured me, saying that they could not possibly get into the Trang river before sunset.

"How shall we know them in the dark when they do come up?" I asked.

"Easy enough, Tuan," said the *sarang*. "The cut of a

Tongkah *sampan* sail is high and narrow. They do not have them here in Trang river."

The *sarang* arranged to raise anchor as soon as the flood began, and to drop up-river a hundred yards so as to leave a clear space for the *sampan* to round up to wind and tide abreast the jetty on her arrival, and to give us room to get under way and manœuvre so as to cut in between her and the wharf at the right time. The *sarang* was delighted with the sketch I made on the back of the chart as to how we should handle the cutting-in evolution.

We arranged for the gig to go away at sundown and bring up under the bank off the point at the far end of the reach. On seeing the *sampan* and being sure that it was the craft we wanted the coxswain was to show a light, and after allowing the *sampan* to pass him was to up sail and follow her two or three hundred yards astern, so as to be in a position to crash into her on her starboard side when she began to round into the wharf. The coxswain, with his three hands, being true Malays, were delighted with the part they had to play. But I had to emphasise "No krisses allowed! and the three Chinese boatmen from Tongkah must not be hurt, unless they show fight! Understand?"

Having made all arrangements possible for the evening, we took the dinghy and started off to attend the great feast up at the Guild building. I realised that this birthday party was probably the most fortunate event for us, for I did not doubt that every member of the Guild would be so genially affected by the good cheer of the banquet as to be practically eliminated as a possible cause of trouble to us. None of them would be near the wharf or river after such an entertainment, and a possible scuffle between boats on the river would on such a night probably pass quite unheeded. Moreover, the whole community would be fully occupied with the evening's fireworks.

Then, as we approached the Chinese quarter and buildings, I recognised the extreme importance of intercepting Fang Soo Choo before he could gain the shelter of this rabbit-warren of dirty streets, fort-like buildings, high white-washed walls and crowded alleys, inhabited by swarms of independent, truculent and turbulent Chinese from all the provinces of China, and of every variety of faction and secret society. Moreover, if he were once to get in touch with his Guild members, our position might become extremely awkward, if not actually dangerous.

The entrance to the Guild building was distinctly impressive. The massive Chinese gateway was decorated with long gorgeous banners hung on each side with immense Chinese lettering—all red, black and gold. Pictures of hideous ogre faces, and some very clever devil-faces, peered out of clouds at us as we walked into the large kitchen courtyard leading into the main club hall.

When we arrived the party was nearly complete. The genial Kapitan China, Teng Wai Chun, arrayed in the most gorgeous coloured silks, with tiny gold buttons down the front of his jacket, laughed and chatted in the midst of a throng of stout and genial compatriots, dressed for the most part only a little less magnificently than their leader. Around the long table down the room stood numbers of smart, slim, young servitors in clean loose white. It always struck me as remarkable how the Chinaman, who was so often content to live in everyday surroundings which we regarded as unsavoury and disgusting, could when dressed well, with his long pigtail plaited with red silk, and his pale shaven countenance, look one of the cleanest and most respectable of men. The explanation seemed to me to lie in the remarkable cleanliness of the operation of shaving all the head round the portion which makes the pigtail. The effect was to broaden and deepen the forehead, and give an intellectual expression to the whole face, which was much above the average in its appearance of intelligence and benignity. Similarly, nothing was so wild and unkempt-looking as the Chinaman with his head improperly shaved.

On this occasion our hosts had all the benignity of expression, and the appearance of hearty enjoyment, that might be expected of a synod of bishops of the Anglican Church met together for a friendly dinner. Their welcome was of the warmest. They all vied with one another in talking Siamese and the one or two who spoke English were delighted to show their prowess in that language.

In such a festive gathering it was difficult to remember that these genial people would stick at nothing if it suited them, and that I was there with a motive which now seemed sinister and out of place. The thought that I might be called upon to act in direct opposition to their interests, or those of their friends, made me uncomfortable.

The Chinese repast in the high beautifully decorated room was, as we had anticipated, extremely greasy and sloppy when compared with Siamese or Malay cooking. We had all good appetites, having had only a hasty breakfast on board on the way up-river. We sat there, I next to Teng Wai Chun himself, Nai Suk a little lower down, and Nai Dhow among some much younger Chinese farther down the room, all digging promiscuously with our neighbours into the varied dishes in unearthly silence, which was only broken at intervals by a gasp from Teng Wai Chun, "What! not eat *Pork!*" followed by repeated dives into the steaming dishes. We were pressed to drink a fiery brandy neat, and that with the temperature at about 90° Fahr. Luckily for us there was some fairly clean-looking curried fowl, with rice and pineapple shavings; and the usual tiny cups of Chinese tea afterwards, served with lemon, saved our lives.

At last conversation began and soon became fast and furious, but, of course, the most noise came from the elders and seniors; the younger men behaved with respectful propriety and were singularly quiet. I contrasted them in my mind with the undergraduate tables at a big 'do' at Trinity and came to the conclusion that we had been far less well-mannered. I certainly had the opportunity of learning all there was to know about the pepper trade; about the buying and export of *attaps* for the thatching of Penang, Kedah, Selangor and other places to the south; about the dried fish industry in the great lake (or inland sea) of Singora; about the tin mining industry; about the cost of road-making, and the Rajah's administration generally. But I was feeling bored and anxious.

We must have been there over four hours. The place was full of noise, tobacco smoke and the smell of brandy and *samshu*, pork and *kapi* (or rotten fish) — the Worcester sauce of the East.

Nai Suk and Nai Dhow, though looking flushed, were still commendably sober. I caught their eye and rose, and in my best Siamese and a loud voice, said—

"Oh, Teng Wai Chun and men of this Seven Dragon Kongsi, it is a custom with us to drink to the health of the honourable person whose birthday it is, to his most worthy family and noble ancestors, to his past and his future. I do so now, thanking you for your kindness, as I have to leave on a journey. Health to Teng Wai Chun!"

This was received with terrific applause, laughter, much shaking of hands and many shouts from the senior members in the upper part of the room; and in the excitement we were permitted to say our farewells hastily and make our escape. To tell the truth, we were all three very glad to be out of the place — the atmosphere within was too foreign, too devilish, too Mongolian. We had all of us the same feeling —that anything might happen in that Kongsi.

I breathed again once I was on board the *Phra Muang*, with Rover sniffing round. He could smell the fact that we had been in a veritable hot-bed of Chinese odours and he evidently did not approve.

Night was coming down and the flood-tide making as we stepped aboard from the dinghy.

"All ready, *sarang?*"

"All ready, Tuan. Steam is up—anchor short—I shifted her an hour ago. We shan't have to wait long with this wind to push them up the river."

The wind was cold after the heat of the Kongsi banquet, and we sat round the boiler-casing smoking silently. An hour passed. I got up and paced the short deck. Were we on a fool's errand ? Had we miscalculated ? Had they made for the Hailam junk after all ? Had they taken some other route ? Was Fang Soo Choo not coming to the Guild at all ? A thousand questions and uncertainties assailed me. But I said nothing of them.

Then, suddenly, "The light, Tuan ! "

Everything was now activity. My mind felt at rest again. The boarding party, under Nai Suk, took up position along the starboard rail. They were Nai Dhow, my good 'boy' Deng in his usual high spirits, one Malay quartermaster, one ditto stoker, our Chinese cook, Ah Sân, and the police sergeant from Puket, whose belt was hung round with handcuffs.

"Take those off your belt and have them ready," said I. "Now mind ! no firing, even if they fire. Jump right on to the end of the *kadjang* ; make them come out the after side, where the sergeant will handcuff them. Ah Sân ! call out to the Chinese boatmen that they are all right if they are quiet. Call out to Fang Choo Soo that he is to come out quietly or he will be shot inside the *kadjang*. Understand ? "

The engine was given a turn or two. At length, standing on the fore-cabin top with my glasses, I could see a tall Chinese lug-sail down the reach against the sky. I watched her come nearer, and when I could see the loom of her with my naked eye, I joined the *sarang* by the wheel.

"Up anchor and touch ahead."

The two hands in the bows clanked the winch furiously, the engine kicked round gently.

"Anchor's up, Tuan," came from for'ard. The tall sail came nearer, broad on our starboard bow ; it came tearing along as if to pass us by. Then it gybed with the gentle motion and the rustling sound of a Chinese lug-sail, which is so balanced that the part before the mast steadies the whole manœuvre. Some way astern and outside her came another sail. "There's the gig," said the *sarang*.

Now the tall sail seemed to hesitate. Slowly at first, then more rapidly, it began to slide athwart the dark river ahead of us. She was rounding up to wind and tide, sidling in towards the jetty.

"Half speed ! " I said, my heart in my mouth. "Full speed ! "

The little ship jumped forward. These things in the dark are not as easy as in daylight. The *Peng Suey* seemed to be shooting across the river towards the jetty at such a pace that for a moment I doubted our getting alongside her. Then, as her helmsman luffed her more into the wind to check her speed, I feared we were going too fast and would overshoot her.

"Stop her!—full astern!—stop!" I cried, as our bow came level with her port quarter.

Her helmsman had suddenly seen us and put his helm hard down. I found myself looking down on her as she sheered away. The *sarang*, too, whirled his wheel hard over and we swung with her. Then came a crash on the other side as the gig fell neatly abroad the *sampan* on her starboard side. The helmsman of the *sampan*, none other than the son of old Fen Loo of Puket, cried out more startled than anything. A figure flew through the air from our bows and landed on the fore-deck of the *sampan*, taking a rope's end which was at once made fast. I heard Ah Sân, our cook, calling to the helmsman and his men in Chinese and then to the inmates of the *kadjang*.

The boarding party had disappeared from our rail and landed on the *kadjang* of the *sampan* on hands and knees. And there they met the gig's crew, who had come in from the other side. The big sail still swung wildly overhead in the wind, till one of our Malays let go the halyard and it fell neatly in the topping lifts.

We now hung three lanterns along the side to enable our people to see what they were doing.

"Quick!" I heard Nai Suk saying. "Here's a hand; slip 'em on!"

It was not so easy. There was a scuffle. A pistol went off. Two—three shots. Fang Choo Soo and his men were putting up a fight; but it did not last long. All three were pretty helpless under the *kadjang*, where they were as good as smothered, and they were safely handcuffed inside of two minutes.

We had swung across the river, and had to go astern hard, and then ahead with helm hard over to straighten up to wind and tide in the channel once more. Then we had to get our three prisoners on board, which required a lot of pushing from below and heaving on our deck. The struggle had rendered them breathless and no one had uttered a sound so far; but as we hustled them forward, the smaller man of the three began to shout—long-drawn Chinese cries. Somebody gave him a crack on the head to silence him; it was easier and quicker than attempting to gag him. All three were then hustled below, the companion hatch closed upon them, bolted and padlocked, and half a ton of spare coils of rope deposited on top. We collected two big Colts and a good service Webley off them, with a small sack full of ammunition.

The gig was hoisted up hand over hand. The *sampan* was kept towing alongside, and the crew were given a meal of rice, for which they were duly grateful. If somewhat surprised at the termination of their voyage they did not show it. Having evidently been well remunerated beforehand, they took all events quite philosophically, and prepared to anchor in the mouth of the *klong* by which they had come and to commence their return voyage next day. We dropped them at the entrance to their water-way as we passed it, with mutual wishes for a pleasant voyage.

> "The sea wind sang
> Shrill, chill, with flakes of foam."

The engine worked up her revolutions; the bow wave broadened; the fire-flies flashed along the banks, and the cicadas trilled their nightly song. Here and there we passed the few lights of a village, or the tall silhouette of a group of palms waving in the night wind against the brightening stars.

We carried no lights, for we had to pass the Hailam junk without arousing her crew to any kind of interference. At ten-thirty, when we should be passing the narrows, there would be ten feet of water in the shallow channel on the other side of the 'horse.' The difficulty would be to turn over at the right spot without getting on the shallows in the centre of the river. The *sarang* felt confident he could do it. At last, with my night-glasses I could make out the tall main and fore mast-heads of the junk with her long vanes streaming in the wind. "There she is," I said.

"All right, Tuan—helm over two spokes—steady," he said to the man at the wheel. The leadsman dropped his lead without a splash. In an undertone he gave us two fathoms, and then one and a half. But the flood was making, and here inside the entrance the water was smooth. With not a sound on board we passed the tall shape on the other side of the shoal. A foot less than the fathom and a half, but still we kept on. The tall masts seemed to drift astern past our starboard side. A muttered word to the quartermaster, who went noiselessly in his bare feet, and the rhythm of the engine suddenly increased its beats. Faster, faster until we were going full speed ahead, and a phosphorescent bow-wave broke out under the forefoot. The tall masts were lost in the dark night astern, and we churned our way direct down the main channel for the open sea. Nai Suk and Nai Dhow, with the patient Puket policemen, who had crouched by the rail with our sporting rifles ready as we passed the big junk, rose and breathed and stretched their arms, and very soon were collected on the after-deck chattering with self-congratulation. A sentry was placed on the fore-hatch, and after a cup of hot cocoa had been served all round, everyone lay down to smoke or sleep, until the change of watch.

This time, owing to the darkness and our need for speed, we kept the main channel to the south of Pulo Telibong. I slept uneasily propped up in the tiny wheel-house, constantly waking, and walking round the raised cabin-top of the saloon at intervals. From the snatches of talk aft, and the glow of pipes and cigarettes, I knew that no one was doing much sleeping that night.

As we drew out past the dark loom of the islands we met the roll of the Indian Ocean once again, and the ship began to plunge over the long heave of the swell.

After two hours' steaming we were clear of the shoal-ground to the west of the island, and we altered course to N. 42° W. for Puket Harbour, seventy miles distant.

Dawn at length and the stars beginning to dim; the ship with the sea on the port bow pitching and rolling, the wind a point north of west and increasing with a hard sky to windward.

"Any news of your friends below?" I asked Nai Suk, who was sitting on the after hatch looking a bit yellow about the gills.

"There was some knocking and shouting on the underside of the hatch before I came off my spell, but I took no notice."

The quartermaster, who had trailed a line over the stern with a white rag on the end, suddenly began to haul in, and brought on board a fine barracouta, saluted by Nai Suk as *pla-in-see* in Siamese. We caught three or four more during the morning.

We passed to leeward of Pulo Mohea, and later on close under the lee of the bold white rocks of the Pilgrim. Outside us lay the lofty, lovely Pulo Rajah, a mile and a half long, crowded with deep jungle to its thousand-foot summit. And then the Peak of Puket began to rise above the horizon ahead. The glory of the green isles and racing seas was lost upon me to-day, I was so anxious to get in and hand over our catch.

We were approaching the roadstead. "*Sarang*," said I, "hoist signal 'send armed boat.' Slow down to half speed to give them time."

I could see that our arrival had been signalled at the lighthouse, and now our N.U.K. was repeated. Presently under the green background of the islands a white hull stood out—we soon recognised the *Coronation*. What had brought the gunboat back so early from the south? Probably her arrival was a mere accident. I felt pleased to see her, anyhow.

Deasy, who was temporarily in command, said afterwards that when he saw N.U.K. flying he thought it was some joke of mine, but as we steamed past him and he saw the police sergeant standing by the forehatch with a formidable gun in his hands he began to think there was something on.

We passed under his stern, stopped and let go the hook half a cable off his starboard quarter. He very obligingly trained his after three-pounder on our fore-deck, and then jumped into his cutter with his party and came alongside.

In the meantime Captain Webber, to whom the signal of our arrival had been reported, had hastened to come off. His long police gig came tearing out of the river entrance and across the roads at a great pace with the fresh off-shore wind behind her. He jumped on board before I had had time to tell Deasy more than a few words.

"Come aft a moment," he said; and then, "Have you really got him?"

"Yes," I said. "We clapped him and his two mates under hatches last night and I reckon they are there yet. But it was really Nai Suk who did the trick."

"Thank you," said he, as if we had conferred a personal favour on him. "Very neat indeed. But it is murder this time."

"What d'you mean?" I asked sharply.

"We want them for murder: cold-blooded murder."

"What!"

"The bodies of three of their own men were found by Andersen and his marines that morning on searching the place after we had gone into the town—locked up in the tin-smelting house—shot for refusing to carry out some order. They had not had time to bury them. And we have enough evidence now to hang them all three with a dozen warps apiece!"

"Gosh," said I; "that's why they were making such a bolt of it."

"Get them up," said Captain Webber.

We walked forward. At a sign from me Nai Suk slid back the hatch with the air of pride of a fisherman about to display a record catch. He called down.

There was no reply. He beckoned to the sergeant of police who had, as he said, "gaffed the fish for us"; and together they went below. It did not take them long to persuade Fang Soo Choo and his two friends that it was best to obey orders.

They stumbled up the companion.

Not a word was spoken. The three men looked slowly round. They found armed men standing silent about them. They looked beyond to where the white gunboat lay, and then they must have recognised the Peak of Puket standing like a silent sentinel above us all.

Yet not by a flicker of an eyelid did any of the three men betray the slightest sign of surprise or other emotion. In fact I remember that Fang Soo Choo smiled as he was hustled over the side into the police boat for the last earthly voyage he was likely to make.

THE BACKS.

BY A. L. MAYCOCK.

In these days of quick travel and easy transport of material there is a general uniformity of architectural style all over the country. It may be that, in time to come, this will be true of speech and manners also; for it is certain that, under modern conditions, local varieties of dialect and custom are tending to disappear. Books like Mr Torr's series of 'Small Talks' at Wreyland show us how much of the gracious and picturesque life of the countryside, strongly local in flavour, has vanished even during the past half century—quaint old medicinal remedies; varied fragments of lore and wisdom relating to the weather, the care of cattle, the tilling of the soil and so on; homely recipes and old processes of brewing, baking and the rest; and along with these, it may be, a number of silly superstitions and prejudices rooted deeply in the past and handed down from generation to generation. It may be that the rich variety of our national life is destined to be still further impoverished under the conditions of our time; for so many factors—the national system of education, broadcasting, popular newspapers, motoring and the cinematograph—seem to be aiding one another in setting a stamp of absolute uniformity upon our whole culture. Of course the process is no new one: it has been going on for at least a hundred and fifty years. We take it for granted now that there should be no such thing as a local variety of architectural style and technique. A bungalow is a bungalow, whether it is put up at Shoreham or at Whitley Bay. Factories, public buildings and churches owe any divergencies they may possess not to local conditions but to the ideas of individual architects.

It has not always been so. Until the middle of the eighteenth century the English builder was primarily dependent upon materials that could be quarried within a few miles of his work. There were exceptions to this rule, of course. Even in the thirteenth century Purbeck marble was sent all over England from the quarries near Portland. The big towns and the wealthy monastic foundations could afford to have their building stone brought from anywhere they wished, or even to import it, as the Canterbury monks imported freestone from Normandy. A good deal of material was transported by river, especially in the eastern counties. But in general the builder was forced to cut his coat according to his cloth. Ingenuity and resourcefulness were thereby stimulated; and it is to conditions of climate and geological formation that the rich variety of English Gothic architecture is largely due. The massive wooden porches of Sussex, the round towers of Norfolk, the stone-and-flint panelling of Suffolk—these and many other distinctively local features represent the varied solutions of the local builder to conditions imposed upon him by nature. No study of Gothic architecture—or indeed of all English building up to the middle of the eighteenth century—is complete unless this factor is taken into account. Indeed, for the amateur, there is no more fascinating point of view from which to study it.

There runs across England, in a broad curving diagonal, a belt of oolitic limestone, the finest building material that we possess. It runs roughly from the Quantock Hills through Somerset and Gloucester, Wiltshire and Oxford, then bending northward through Northampton and Lincoln to the eastern riding of Yorkshire. Along this broad strip is to be found almost all the finest English building between the Norman Conquest and the American War of Independence: the cathedrals of Lincoln, Salisbury, Wells, Worcester, Lichfield and Southwell, the magnificent parish churches of Northamptonshire, such great monastic foundations as Glastonbury and Winchcombe, and such private mansions as Wollatton, Wentworth and Montacute. Farther north you have York Minster and the Cistercian houses of Yorkshire like Rievaulx and Kirkstall; whilst Lincolnshire can show, besides its cathedral, the superb tower of Boston and the steeple of Louth. Every beauty of Gothic art in masonry, sculpture and ornament is found represented in its most perfect form in this range of English buildings; for the stone used lent itself to detailed work of every description. In general, too, it has weathered well; so that the finest workmanship of those times has been also the best preserved.

Whereas Oxford lies closely adjacent to this great limestone belt, Cambridge is definitely outside it with no easy communication westward. That, I fancy, is why Cambridge possesses so little good Gothic work of earlier date than, say, 1450. We have, of course, part of the original buildings of Peterhouse; we have the old court of Corpus; we have the much-restored chapel of Jesus. But apart from one or two of the parish churches, this is really about all. The fact is that all through the ages, until the coming of mechanical transport in the last century, the Cambridge builder has been confronted with the problem of finding a decent building stone within accessible distance. The material used in the earliest collegiate buildings was clunch, a soft chalky stone, very easily worked but quite incapable of prolonged resistance to the weather. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, therefore, most of the ancient foundations found themselves under the necessity, either of demolishing the damaged fabrics altogether and rebuilding, or of restoring the refacing in a more durable material. In both cases, of course, the work was carried out in accordance with an architectural tradition quite different from the original. Some colleges did the one thing, some the other. Clare, whose old buildings had been severely damaged by fire in 1525, was entirely rebuilt. Peterhouse was largely refaced. At Emmanuel they seem to have pulled down what was left of the old Dominican priory and started afresh; and so the story could be continued. If the age of Gothic building had closed before the Cambridge builder had found a substitute for clunch, Gothic architecture might have disappeared from Cambridge altogether—with the single exception of King's Chapel.

Such a substitute was found. It was found, we may say, at exactly the right moment. In the first half of the fifteenth century the builders, despairing of the treacherous crumbling stuff that had been used hitherto, started to experiment in brick. There had been small brickfields in East Anglia for a hundred years previously. But bricks—or Flanders tiles, as they were first called—had not come into anything like general use, and had certainly not been used on any large-scale building. Between 1450 and 1600—the great age of collegiate foundations in Cambridge—there arose a series of buildings unlike anything else in England. The Gothic tradition was still vigorous and inventive at the beginning of the period, and had, by the end of it, extended its influence over the whole field of domestic architecture. In the older colleges one had been conscious of monastic precedent and the monastic spirit. There is nothing cloistral about these new Cambridge foundations—Queens', Jesus, St John's and Christ's. In them the spirit of the English Renaissance seems to take visible form. Their proper setting is the spacious English landscape of lawn and park and avenue, a setting which the Backs very perfectly provide for two of them. The soft warmth of the brickwork, the absence of all fussy ornament, the curving lines of the Flemish gables, the graceful oriels and the turreted towers set corner-wise, the green carpet of lawn within, the massive gate-tower over the main entrance and the easy symmetry of the whole effect—all these features combine to suggest the country house or mansion. The buildings have a repose and well-mannered charm, a certain complacency which the earlier age had not known. And of these warm-brick colleges of Cambridge one stands sentinel, as it were, at either end of the Backs—

St John's to the north and Queens' to the south.

Perhaps at this point it would be well to offer you some kind of general introduction to Cambridge and a word or two of advice. You must realise at the outset that Cambridge is not a sort of second edition of Oxford. The appeal of Oxford is immediate and peremptory. A man visiting the city for the first time is overpowered as by a vision and a beauty almost unbearable. Cambridge will never impress you in the same way, for Cambridge is not known so easily. She speaks in softer, less imperious accents. Her method is gentle and persuasive, and she lays her spell upon a man gradually, almost shyly. Thus her appeal is a thing different in kind and in degree from that of Oxford, though it is none the less powerful on that account. But because the two places are so different—because one must look for contrast even more than comparison—one should not attempt to see them in the same way. You have heard of the Backs and you know that they are regarded as the special glory of Cambridge. You should not, on that account, rush headlong to Clare Bridge and expect to stand spellbound as you stood upon the Radcliffe Gallery. That is quite the wrong way to start. You will do better to come with me down Mill Lane at the far end of which there is a boatyard where adequate punts may be hired. Settle yourself down with proper deliberation. Take plenty of cushions and light up a pipe. I will undertake the propulsion of the vessel, and I will allow you half an hour's complete laziness.

A punt is indicated, for a punt is conducive to that detachment, that 'serene indifference to hubbub' commended by Mr Max Beerbohm. No gramophones or portable wireless sets or other noisy apparatus should be brought on board; for these things provide distraction of a kind that we do not need. In a punt the physical man may relax completely. And, curiously enough, this semi-somnolent condition is precisely the right frame of mind in which to see the Backs for the first time. One should come to them, not as an eager hustling sightseer—guide-book in hand, map unfurled, field-glasses pendent from the shoulder and all the rest of it—but passively and almost drowsily. For it needs no effort of any kind to appreciate the beauty of the Backs; and if you are going to see the things in Cambridge that are most worth seeing—the things that will need keen attention and an alert eye for detail—you may safely reserve your energies for the present. Your first impression should be quite a general one, hazy and ill-defined, without any of the clear exactitude of guide-book information. You see venerable walls rising sheer from the water's edge, splendid buildings lying back from the river beyond smooth expanses of lawn, many bridges whose arches are reflected full-circle in the quietly rippling surface, tennis courts and sheltered groves and old houses tucked away in unexpected corners. And everywhere there is the shade of lime and chestnut, willow and laburnum, the whole blending in a landscape that is very peaceful and very English. On this first visit the mind must be quite free to savour the full and varied fragrance of the scene. Do not attempt to clog the memory with a lot of names and dates; all that can wait until later. And when you come to identify the various buildings and to study the architectural and historical detail, your new knowledge of these things will be coloured and animated by the warmth of the first impression. The same principle applies in the matter of reading. I always think that in order to appreciate a book properly—a book that is worth the effort, of course—one should read it through twice. At the first reading one should try to enjoy the book as a whole without any conscious effort to commit its contents to memory or to concentrate upon detail. The second reading will be harder work because the first effect of freshness will have gone. But one will now see the parts in proper relation to the whole. The first reading gave one the general outline; now one sees the detail filled in, giving sharp definition, perspective and proportion.

Well, now, let us assume that, gently and without effort, we have navigated the Backs from end to end. We have just passed beneath a bridge that reminds you vaguely of Venice; and another bridge, plainly municipal, with motor-buses lumbering across it, lies ahead. This is the outward limit of our journey and we must start to return. You have seen the Backs as a confused whole, and on the way back I will try to give you some idea as to what it is all about. You remember how we spoke of the two colleges, St John's and Queens', as standing at either end of the Backs—St John's to the north and Queens' to the south. It is the first of these, one of the most famous of Cambridge colleges, that we are now approaching.

St John's bestrides the river in no uncertain fashion by means of two bridges which are known as the Bridge of Sighs and the Kitchen Bridge. The former is a single span and looks rather like a sort of pontine cloister. It was built in 1827 by Rickman as part of his design for the new court on the western bank of the river. We in Cambridge are rather inclined to laugh at nineteenth century Gothic, though heaven knows we have good reason to groan as well. Certainly Rickman's court at St John's has been more mercilessly ridiculed than any other group of buildings in Cambridge, with the possible exception of the railway station.

From the river the effect is austere and forbidding. One has no desire to see more. But a little farther on we shall be able to see the whole block in its proper perspective, and I think we shall be agreeably surprised. As for the Bridge of Sighs, it has always seemed to me a clever design carried out in an original and effective manner. Under the circumstances it was clearly necessary to provide a covered passageway of some kind; and that is by no means an easy task if you wish to combine grace and elegance with mere utility. The alternative to Rickman's plan would presumably have been a tubular bridge, figured or panelled in some way. The mere suggestion of such a thing makes one appreciate Rickman.

He was, as a matter of fact, a very remarkable man. He started his professional life as a chemist at Maidenhead. Then he moved to London and worked as an assistant to a doctor. After a year or two of this he started a grocery business at Saffron Walden, still evidently restless and unsettled. He returned to London in 1799, qualified as a doctor, and practised for two years at Lewes. Once more he came back to London, and, after working for five years in a corn merchant's office, he accepted a post as an insurance clerk with a Liverpool firm. He was now thirty-two; and it was during the ten years of his life at Liverpool that he seems to have found himself. He had long been interested as an amateur in architecture, and particularly in the architecture of the Middle Ages; and in 1817 he published his 'Attempt to Discriminate the Styles of English Architecture from the Conquest to the Reformation.' At that time, we must remember, nobody knew the first thing about such matters. There was plenty of speculation and guesswork, but no foundation of real knowledge. The principles and the technique of Gothic building were forgotten and ignored. The fact makes Rickman's achievement all the more impressive; for in his book he formulated a careful grammar of Gothic architecture in this country and set the whole subject on a firm basis. It was he who invented the division of English Gothic into the three 'styles' of Early English, Decorated and Perpendicular—a classification that is still used in most of our text-books. The book made his reputation, and he stepped at once into the vanguard of the Gothic revival. Two years after its publication he built St George's Church at Birmingham. He put a magnificent spire on the parish church at Saffron Walden—to show them what a grocer could do when he tried; he competed unsuccessfully for the University Library and the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge, and for the Houses of Parliament. But he is best remembered for his work at St John's, where he built the immense three-sided court beyond the Backs.

The mellowed brick of the older buildings on the eastern bank makes a pleasant picture from the river. The main block of chambers which forms the western wing of the third court stands back a little beyond a low battlemented wall: and beyond it again you have the southern wing terminating on the riverside in a graceful Flemish gable. The most interesting building is the library, which rises from the water's edge, buttressed and pinnacled in the manner of the fifteenth century. The eye is held by the fine oriel window; and then you notice the date, 1624, outlined in white stone above it. You are surprised that a building so obviously Gothic should have been erected so late. You had been inclined to think that Gothic architecture came to a sharp and definite end with the year 1537. That is quite a common mistake, and it rests upon quite a simple misunderstanding.

The fifteenth century had been pre-eminently an age of church building. In the sixteenth there took place the adaptation of Gothic principles to the new needs of domestic architecture. The great Tudor mansions like Hampton Court, Audley End and Compton Winyates are as genuinely Gothic as the Divinity School at Oxford or King's Chapel at Cambridge. There is little trace of foreign influence. The tide of the English tradition is still flowing strongly. Critics have often written as though this Tudor-Gothic was an inferior and debased style, a mere hybrid. It was nothing of the kind. It is quite true that the pointed arch was discarded; it was discarded for good and sufficient reasons. For it is an elementary principle of Gothic design that the windows should correspond in form with the shape of the vault. Now in domestic architecture you very rarely need a stone vault, and it would be an artistic blunder to light a ceiled room by means of sharply pointed windows. The Tudor builders saw this clearly; and when you look at the second court of John's or the first court of Queens', you will realise that they evolved, in place of the pointed form, a type of window perfectly suited to domestic requirements. That this was done deliberately is shown when there comes, early in the seventeenth century, a revival of church building. Immediately the old tradition asserts itself: immediately we note the reappearance of the vault, the pointed arch, the traceried window. It is a poor feeble thing, this flickering Gothic revival of the seventeenth century. But, in Oxford particularly, it gave us a series of remarkably fine buildings; and in Cambridge we have, as its single witness, the library of St John's. Centrally above the oriel the letters I. L. C. S. proclaim that it was built by the bounty of John Williams, Bishop of Lincoln, Lord Keeper of the Privy Seal. The strain is not quite pure. There are strong traces of Italian influence. But the building stands in the true lineage of English Gothic, the last of its illustrious line in Cambridge. From that time onwards, for more than two hundred years, English architecture almost ceases to exist, and architecture becomes a commodity which we are content to import from abroad. Only within the present generation have we succeeded in setting back the clock so as to begin where the Caroline builders left off.

Beyond the Bridge of Sighs we pass beneath the very graceful 'Kitchen Bridge,' which was built at the end of the seventeenth century from designs prepared by Wren. Then the view begins to open out on either side. It is as though we were emerging suddenly from the canal street of some Flanders city into the grounds of an incredibly spacious estate in England. In place of retaining walls and buildings looming high over the water, we have a vision of closely trimmed lawns curving down to the river banks. Great elms overhang the bend of the stream, and ahead, beyond a mass of close green foliage, the chimneys and roof-line of what looks like some splendid Tudor mansion make a warm splash of colour against the sky. As a matter of fact, these buildings form the northern wing of Nevile's Court, Trinity; and as we take the bend Wren's great library, which occupies the whole western side, heaves up into view, at first half-hidden by the trees. But before we look at the library you will do well to turn and glance backward towards John's. On the one side you can now see Rickman's buildings as a whole, and you will agree that they are like nothing on earth. There is not much nineteenth century Gothic of which the same can be said. Here is no tame and unintelligent imitation of the old forms, but a strongly original application of Gothic principles on a very large scale. The whole scheme is majestic and finely proportioned. All things considered, this group of buildings is probably the best bit of nineteenth century work in Cambridge. That is a genuine though not a very high compliment.

To the right, and on the opposite side of the river, the tower of John's Chapel shows up finely beyond the warm brickwork of the second court. Professor Hamilton Thompson has observed that Gilbert Scott knew two buildings by heart—the Angel Choir of Lincoln and the Sainte Chapelle at Paris—and that he put one or other into all his designs. At Exeter College, Oxford, he blew up the old chapel with gunpowder in order to build the present replica of the Sainte Chapelle. At St John's, Cambridge, it was apparently not necessary to use explosives, nor was the new chapel copied in detail from an older model. But even from the river one can see the inspiration of Lincoln in the lines of the tower; and from this point you do not realise the disproportionate size of the tower in relation to the rest of the building.

The library of Trinity is fashioned in a warm yellow sandstone with pink-coloured blocks placed here and there in the outer wall. It makes a fine picture from the river and is exactly described by the word 'pile.' People often speak of King's Chapel as an exotic—interesting and beautiful, but essentially freakish. I must admit that I find something much stranger and more foreign in this Italian monster of Wren's. Certainly it has a pompous grandeur and dignity of its own: but I have often wished that the architect had stuck to his original design, which was that of a domed circular building rather like the Radcliffe Camera at Oxford. Had he done so, it would presumably have been unnecessary for Essex to fiddle about with Nevile's court in a belated effort to harmonise its delightful Renaissance features with Wren's massive classicism.

Apart from the incidence of Garret Hostel Bridge, which is a depressing piece of work, this stretch of the Backs between Trinity and King's bridges is very pleasant and gracious. Beyond high walls you have a glimpse of the buildings of Trinity Hall. On the opposite bank are narrow lawns so velvety that it would be a sensuous pleasure to stroke them, willows pendulous over the water, the Fellows' Garden at Clare gay and glowing in the many colours of the spring flowers, the two great avenues of limes that strike across from Trinity and Clare bridges. Then you glide under Clare Bridge with its balustraded parapets surmounted by the double row of balls—perhaps the most graceful of all the bridges and distinguished from the others by a pleasant illusion of decrepitude. Fifty yards farther on the view opens out once more and, on three sides of the great lawn of King's, two acres of incredibly smooth turf, you have a delightful grouping of collegiate buildings—the tranquil south front of Clare, the towering elevation of King's Chapel, the contrasting staidness of Gibbs' long range, and the rather miscellaneous collection of modern buildings that stretches down towards King's Bridge. Clare looks particularly well from here—well mannered and serene, as fine an example of English Renaissance work as can be found anywhere in the country. Between it and King's Chapel you get a sight of the buildings of the University library and the tower of Great St Mary's, the University church; and then you may realise that you have here within view a series of great buildings belonging to each century from the fifteenth to the twentieth. For King's Chapel belongs to the fifteenth and sixteenth, Clare to the seventeenth, Gibbs' block to the eighteenth, and the wings on the southern side to the nineteenth and twentieth.

To the intelligent and fruitful study of such a view as this some knowledge of the historical background is essential. By such knowledge a man's vision of all that he sees is enlarged, and there is born in him a great memory, as it were, of things beyond his experience. For him the past is everywhere alive, informing and enriching the witness of his eyes. And on this stretch of the Backs this sense of the past asserts itself imperiously over the present. For as one looks across this great lawn, one thinks instinctively, not only of the Backs as they were in the days before the building of the colleges, not only of the actual buildings that are standing to-day, but of King's College itself as it would have been if Henry VI., its royal founder, had lived to accomplish the great design. Whilst he was still a young man, the king had already formed in his mind the project which was to become the master interest of his life. Fifty years earlier William of Wykeham had established his great dual foundation of Winchester and New College, Oxford, and in doing so, had set the pattern for all subsequent development. The grammar school at Winchester was to serve as a nursery for the University College at Oxford, and was to provide that proper grounding in Latin and elementary studies that was essential to profitable residence at the University. The young king planned a similar enterprise on a scale even more magnificent than Wykeham's. The boys' school was to be at Eton, beneath the shadow of the royal castle at Windsor: the college was to be at Cambridge. It was on St James' Day, in the year 1446, that the foundation-stone of the chapel was laid.

In the library of the college one may see to-day a remarkable document known as the 'Will of King Henry VI.' It is not a will in the modern connotation of the term. It is simply a statement of the king's formal instructions regarding the planning and disposition of the collegiate buildings. But this is not the work of a mere patron, content to lay down general principles and to leave the working-out of detail to overseers and contractors. On the contrary, every measurement is given with meticulous accuracy. The arrangement of buttresses, battlements and finials, the general scheme of exterior ornament, the placing of bay windows in the hall, the dimensions of the hall and the provost's lodge—each of these matters is dealt with in curt business-like terms that leave no room for ambiguity. One sees the king poring over charts and plans in the library at Windsor, consulting frequently with experts, closeted for long hours with Waynflete, whom he has recently appointed Provost of Eton and to whom he now commits the general charge of the work at Cambridge. Here he is in his element, working eagerly upon the project which of all others lies nearest to his heart. Here, considering how he may still further enrich the vision of the grandest university foundation in Christendom, he can find relief from the cares and sorrows of kingship in a violent age. And we, at a distance of nearly five centuries, can read his words and follow the details of his plan with such clearness that we can construct in the mind's eye a complete picture of King's College as its founder intended to leave it.

Seen from the river, the vision is almost bewildering in its magnificence. The immense bulk of the chapel, thrown in fretted outline against the sky, stands as we see it to-day. The upward thrust of its innumerable pinnacles seems, as it were, like a gathering-up and a fulfilment of the whole. To the west, and standing some twenty yards clear, is a cloistered court, buttressed and embattled—something after the manner of the cloisters at New College, Oxford, but larger in extent and richer in ornament. Clear of this court again, and standing centrally on the side facing the river, rises the bell-tower, 120 feet high, turreted and battlemented like the tower of Great St Mary's, dominating the whole of Cambridge. Where Gibbs' building now stands we have a long range containing the library and the hall; and beyond this we can see the gate-tower on the opposite side of the court, fronting on to what is now King's Parade. Taken as a whole, one may say without exaggeration that this King's College that might have been represents the very crown of Gothic achievement in this country. As you stand upon King's Bridge to-day, you can see it all in the mind's eye—the strong lines of the great bell-tower in the foreground, the traceried arches of the cloisters, the mullioned windows of hall and library, and the chapel itself in the setting that was meant for it. The beauty of the Gothic, its exquisite fitness in our English landscape and climate, lies in its constant emphasis of relief and shadow—in the breaking-up of the surface by battlement, dripstone, deep-set moulding and well-placed panels; and all this without any sacrifice of harmony and regularity. The great criticism of all classic architecture in this country is that it demands the strong sunlight of the Mediterranean countries and is unsuited here.

The Backs are so called because of the various colleges that 'back' so gracefully on to this stretch of the river. It requires some effort of the imagination to take oneself back to the time before the colleges were built or thought of, and to think of Cambridge, not as the seat of the University, but as a busy little river port on the extreme edge of the fens. Wisbech and Lynn were then upon the coast. Southward stretched the great morass broken only by the various 'islands' such as the Isle of Ely and the Isle of March—a huge area of country extending westward to Peterborough and Ramsey, eastward to Brandon and Downham Market, and reaching southward to Fen Ditton, two miles from Cambridge. It is probable that Cambridge, with Lynn as its port, actually stood in tidal waters; and it is certain that the early importance of the town was due to the presence of the river, which enabled it to become the chief distributing centre for merchandise coming in through Lynn. All along the Backs from Magdalene Bridge to where King's Bridge now stands were a series of wharves or hithes—Corn Hithe, Pease Hithe, Garlic Hithe and the rest—where the various commodities were handled. As you view the spacious landscape of the Backs at the present time, you find it difficult to visualise the narrow streets winding down to the river's edge, the general congestion of small houses along the banks themselves, the church towers that are no more (such as St John Zachary, which stood near the west end of King's Chapel), the lumbering barges moving up and downstream, the cries of the boatmen and the bargaining of the merchants, the booths where tolls and custom duties were assessed and collected, the noisy brawling in the riverside taverns—all these things seem very far away and very remote from the tranquil serenity of the Backs as we know them now.

Nothing in Cambridge is quite so enchanting as the first glimpse of Queens' from the river. After the open spaces and the stonework of Trinity, Clare and King's, the warm texture of Queens' strikes a note of intimacy and seclusion. One could never mistake King's or Clare for private houses; from the river one could never think of Queens' as anything else. And in point of fact this is no silly fancy; for the disposition of the buildings is very similar to that of a big Tudor mansion. Yet there is nothing pretentious or self-conscious, no hint of that smug complacency that marks the domestic architecture of the later age. Beyond low railings you have a glimpse of the President's garden and you notice a little iron gate opening on to the water's edge where the great man may embark or disembark at his will. The magnificent house in the background is, of course, the President's Lodge. I should describe it, with the exception of King's Chapel, as the most beautiful single building in Cambridge. It is in the traditional manner of the period, with the heavy timber beams, the tall fluted chimneys, the graceful oriels and irregularly placed lattice windows that you find on a smaller scale in such private houses as the Paycocks' mansion at Coggleshall and Nethergate Hall at Clare. It forms the northern side of the little cloister court of the college, whose western wing backs on to the river. These river buildings are probably older than any other part of the college, and may have formed part of the house of the Carmelite nuns who settled here about 1250 after being flooded out of their original dwelling at Newnham. Of course the present building is nothing like as old as that. The four-centred arches of the windows show that it cannot have been earlier than, say, 1400; and the experts seem to think that 1450 or 1460 is nearer the mark.

As you drift under the amusing timber bridge that spans the river from the college to the gardens opposite, Silver Street Bridge is a few yards ahead. And at first sight you would think that Queens' does not occupy the whole of the corner site. For immediately adjoining the old brick buildings, towering above them, is a great lumping erection that might be anything from a cheap boarding-house to a set of rather dingy offices. The contrast is remarkable, and you will find it almost incredible that this building is as much a part of the college as the President's Lodge. It was built about the middle of the eighteenth century by one James Essex, "an eminent architect and a man of good character and understanding in Cambridge." We shall come across Essex again; for it is scarcely an exaggeration to say that he was responsible for planning most of the ugliest buildings in Cambridge and for spoiling a number of the most beautiful. In one's reading of eighteenth century history one is constantly filled with a sense of thankfulness that these people often ran short of money. Thus, if you turn up Hawksmoor's note-books, you will find his plans for pulling down All Souls at Oxford and for rebuilding in the classic style; and in Skelton's collection of Oxford pictures there is a dreadful panorama called "A Plan for Rebuilding Magdalen College, 1738." Both these plans would have been carried out if sufficient funds had been available; and here in Cambridge, at Queens', we know that Essex proposed to pull down all the old buildings along the river and the President's Lodge as well. The dismal block in the corner formed by Silver Street and the river shows what he intended as a substitute—and presumably as an improvement.

There are some places where a man may find, in the sweep of a landscape or in the harmonies of architecture, a statement, more clearly expressed than if it were written in words, of the philosophy in which he happens to believe. To such a place he will, if he is wise, return time and again, knowing that he will derive from the contemplation of its scene a refreshment that could not come to him in any other way. He will return to it as he returns to a favourite book, and he will find freshness in that which is familiar, new beauty in what is clearly remembered. But—and this is the real heart of the matter—he will find renewed certainty in first principles which had come to be half-doubted, drawing from the shrine a strength which, in the hustle and turmoil of everyday life, is constantly being sapped away. He comes as a pilgrim, and the place possesses for him a quality that is almost sacramental.

I do not think that anyone would feel like this about the Cambridge Backs. Having seen them once, one is, of course, drawn to them again and again, but not for the reasons that we have been describing. It seems to me that the Backs are a sedative rather than a tonic; and I think that other people must feel the same, for although there is a great deal of descriptive and amiably discursive writing about the Backs, there is no rhetoric, none of the fiery stuff that men write when they see Chartres Cathedral for the first time, or when they view the incredible panorama of Oxford from the Radcliffe Gallery. Yet it is evident that there is more in the Backs than the mere charm of landscape and the grouping of fine buildings. There must be a real *genius loci*, however benign and unexacting; and it is much more interesting to try to apprehend it than to tread on the toes of the guide-books by writing of the beauty of the gardens, the bridges, the trees, the colleges and all the rest of it. Besides, a good guide-book is a very difficult kind of book to write; and since Cambridge has at least three or four good ones, it is absurd to add to their number without good reason.

When a man is wearied by the noise and clamour of the outside world, the scramble for front places on the stage and larger letters on the bill; when he wonders why he is repelled by things which other people seem content to accept as natural and normal—the slobbering vulgarities of the newspapers, the boasting and bullying of advertisers, and so forth; when, dissatisfied with his own achievement, he is yet disgusted by the peculiar odour of modern success; when he feels overwhelmed by the press of duties and obligations that seem to have a call upon him; when he finds himself taking all sorts of silly trifles as matters of vital importance; when he becomes obsessed by the tide of contemporary printed matter, thinking that he can only keep abreast of an imaginary stream of ever-broadening culture by incessantly reading new books; when such things as these begin to happen to him it is possible that he will find a real tranquillity of mind, a real recovery of perspective, by spending some quiet hours on the Backs. Perhaps it may seem fanciful and far-fetched to suggest such a thing. It may be that the same effect would be produced by a week-end at the seaside. I do not know. But at any rate we are back at Mill Lane, and it is time to run alongside and disembark.

WOLSELEY.

BY THE HON. SIR JOHN FORTESCUE, LL.D., D.LITT.

The Wolseleys claim to have been settled in Cannock Chase before the Conquest and to have been associated with the extermination of wolves, their arms showing a wolf-hound, their crest being a wolf's head, and their motto Erasmus's saying, *Homo homini lupus.* One of them went to Ireland in 1689, where he helped to raise the Sixth (Inniskilling) Dragoons and saw much service under William III. Thirty or forty years later a branch of the family settled in Ireland, and two brothers of the first generation there born served throughout the Seven Years' War. Two more brothers of the following generation likewise entered the Army, but were destined to spend the most eventful years of the Napoleonic Wars in the West Indies, with no more active fighting than the capture of Martinique and Guadeloupe. Finally one of these begat a son in the third generation, who came into the world in 1833, and was named Garnet Joseph.

The boy, though not tall, was well made, proficient at all athletic exercise, a keen sportsman, and from the very first ambitious of military glory. He had brains in his head, but was bored with the Greek and Latin classics, Homer included, unless they had some solid bearing upon military history; and, apart from history, he delighted chiefly in mathematics. At eighteen he joined the Eightieth Foot (2/South Stafford) and within a few days was shipped off to India in a full-rigged East Indiaman. The voyage to Calcutta occupied five months, but the lad found plenty to do. He had learned to draw; he had a few military books with him, and his head was crammed with the contents of several more; he studied Hindustani; and, for exercise, went aloft with the crew to reef top-gallant sails. Shortly after his arrival in India he was sent with a draft of recruits to Rangoon, where he learned his drill, but found that the war, in which he had hoped to take part, was to all appearance ended. There was, however, a powerful chief, with a stronghold deeply hidden in the jungle, who was giving much trouble; and in March 1853 Wolseley was summoned to join a small force of thirteen or fourteen hundred men, which had been assembled by Sir John Cheape, to make an end of this warrior. After twelve hideous days of wandering in the jungle with cholera making havoc of the troops, the stronghold was discovered. Young

Wolseley volunteered to be of the storming party, and was leading his men gallantly on when he was brought down by a heavy bullet in the upper part of the thigh. The stronghold was duly carried, and the young ensign was mentioned for distinguished conduct in despatches; but the poor boy suffered terribly. He had lost much blood, for the big bullet had ripped away a great part of the muscles of the thigh—he had never again his old firm seat in a saddle to his dying day; all wounds healed septically in those days, and the stench of his own hurt and of those of others in the hospital was unbearable. The thermometer rose to 109 degrees Fahrenheit, he was seized with something like cholera, and only after many weeks was he put on board a steamer and sent home by way of the Cape.

Upon arrival he was transferred to the Ninetieth (2/Scottish Rifles) on promotion, and in November 1854, just a fortnight after the battle of Inkerman, he embarked with his regiment for the Crimea, landing at Balaclava on the 3rd of December. In a few days he found himself in the trenches before Sebastopol, then rapidly approaching their worst. The camp and all of its approaches were a sea of mud; men and frequently officers were inadequately clothed and miserably fed; and the utmost that the British and their enemies could do was to keep the batteries and parallels tolerably clear of mire and water. There were food and clothing in abundance at Balaclava, only eight miles away; but the intervening space was one great morass and there was no proper provision for transport and supply. Both sides were so wretched that they remained apathetic in great measure so far as fighting was concerned, a spirit, or lack of spirit, which young Wolseley regarded with high disapproval. He maintained that activity, adventure and enterprise heartened the men against danger and hardship and had a daunting effect upon the enemy.

Within a month he was taken away from his battalion to become an assistant engineer, being qualified for the work by some knowledge of surveying and assiduous study of fortification. His duties took him to the foremost of the siege-works where the danger was greatest, but he escaped unhurt until the end of August, when he received a nasty wound from the bursting of a shell. His left cheek was cut away until it hung down over his collar, a large jagged stone was embedded in his jaw, and he was cut and bruised all over. This put him out of action until after the fall of Sebastopol, but he suffered no permanent injury beyond loss of sight in the right eye; and on his recovery he was sent for by the Quartermaster-General, Sir Richard Airey, and posted to the staff of his department. Since Airey was about the best-trained and most capable officer in the Army, Wolseley was in the right place for learning his business. He was already a Captain, and but for the fact that he had not yet served six years in the Army would have been a Major.

Returning home at the close of the war in 1856, Wolseley's regiment was early in 1857 ordered out to China, and on the way diverted to India owing to the outbreak of the great mutiny. The voyage was eventful, for he was embarked upon an unseaworthy transport-steamer, which was probably saved from going to the bottom with all hands by striking an uncharted rock in the Straits of Banca. Every soul was safely landed on an island, where they remained for ten days until a sailing man-of-war arrived and took them to Singapore, whence two more men-of-war carried them to Calcutta. From thence, after the men had been re-armed and re-clothed, the detachment marched for Cawnpore. Wolseley distinguished himself with his regiment at the second relief of Lucknow in March 1858, after which he was appointed Quartermaster-General on the staff of Sir Hope Grant, then in command of a division. Sir Hope was rather a curiosity among soldiers, his chief passion being music in general and the playing of the violoncello in particular. He had served all his life in the cavalry, was a fine horseman, a good rider to hounds and very efficient in handling his own arm. He could take in an enemy's position swiftly and accurately, and make his dispositions skilfully and well. Moreover, he had a shrewd common-sense, which guided him truly in matters both of strategy and tactics. But he had studied few books besides his Bible, and could hardly read a map—a strange contrast to the staff officer of five-and-twenty who had from boyhood devoured every military treatise that he could find. With him Wolseley wandered about Oudh for a year, stamping out the embers of the rebellion, and gained some very useful experience as well in matters to be avoided as in those that should be performed.

Hardly was this work over when Sir Hope Grant was ordered off to China with eleven thousand men, there to join a French force of some six thousand troops in operations against Pekin. Wolseley, now a Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel, accompanied him on the staff of the Quartermaster-General, and, having able men over him, learned much. The enemy were not very formidable as combatants, but there were difficult problems of transport and supply which, had the war lasted longer, might have been hard of solution. The French Commander also was captious and obstructive, though he was quietly overborne by Sir Hope Grant's shrewd common-sense and tact. Wolseley published an account of the operations, elucidated by maps of his own making, which is still of real value to the historian. His narrative is a little wordy, but it has clearness and movement.

So far Wolseley's career had been remarkable. In eight years' service, of which one had been consumed in travelling twice to India and back, he had seen operations of war in four different quarters. He had gone through a campaign of tropical jungle in Burma; a siege in the Crimea; the assault of a crowded city at Lucknow; a long military perambulation of Oudh, with constant little fighting affairs; and an amphibious expedition, very well and successfully conducted, in China. He had served with infantry and engineers and on the staff. He had been partly crippled in one leg and had lost the sight of one eye. He was, entirely in virtue of his own merit, a Lieutenant-Colonel at twenty-six; he had the opportunity of observing the ignorance and demerit of many officers, regimental and staff, and the signal ability of the distinguished few who knew their business; and he had noted many obsolete absurdities in the matter of red tape, dress, equipment and discipline.

He had earned a holiday and promised himself a season's hunting in Ireland in the winter of 1861. He bought a couple of horses and had ridden each of them to hounds on one day, when he received sudden orders to sail for Canada, without delay, on the staff of the Quartermaster-General. An American frigate had forcibly taken two envoys of the Southern States from the British steamer *Trent*; there seemed to be every prospect of war with the Northern States, and British troops were hurrying across the Atlantic to Canada. Once again he was doomed to travel in an unseaworthy transport. She sailed from Woolwich on 7th December 1861, and after many vicissitudes, including shortage of coal, provisions and water, at last got into Halifax on the 5th January 1862. The quarrel with the United States was speedily composed, but Wolseley was destined to remain in Canada for ten years. He seized the opportunity to visit the camp of the Confederate Army, had conversations with General Lee and with Stonewall Jackson, and returned to his place full of admiration for all three.[1] But his principal business, now that the late alarm of war had opened Canada's eyes to her defencelessness, was the reorganisation of the Canadian Militia; and, under the direction of a very capable British officer, he became commandant of the first cadets' training camp ever known in the Dominion. So also when, in 1866, a camp was formed on the Niagara Peninsula as a precaution against Indian raids, Wolseley was chosen to command it, which brought him into yet closer touch with the Canadian Militia. Good fortune presently gave him the chance to test the material which he had made.

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[1] "A Month's Visit to the Confederate Headquarters," 'Blackwood's Magazine,' January 1863.

A petty rebellion had declared itself at Fort Garry, the chief post of the Hudson's Bay Company, in the province now known as Winnipeg. These rebels had murdered the chief of one of the Government's surveying parties, and had turned back another official who was on his way to Fort Garry; and it was necessary that the long arm of the law should reach them. One British and two Canadian battalions, with detachments of Royal Engineers and Royal Artillery, fourteen hundred men in all, were selected for the work, and the command of the expedition was entrusted to Wolseley. The enemy to be encountered was not likely to be formidable, but the enterprise presented some very nice problems. The base was Port Arthur, on the western shore of Lake Superior, and from thence the distance to Fort Garry was over six hundred miles, in the course of which must be crossed the watershed, 800 feet up, from which the rivers flowing southward make their way to the St Lawrence and those flowing northward into Hudson's Bay. The entire distance must be traversed by water, and from the moment of quitting the base to the moment of arrival at Fort Garry the expedition entered upon a wilderness. Everything needed, therefore, must be taken upon the boats—everything to the very last detail. Yet the boats must not be overloaded, otherwise navigation would be dangerous; and they must not be too heavy, for, where the navigation was interrupted by rapids, it was necessary to unload them and trail them overland, sometimes for over a mile, often across steep and rugged ground. These interruptions, known as portages, might cause damage over and above that brought about by the perils of navigation, so there must be repairing tools for every unit. Thus the contents of each boat must be exactly thought out and rigidly replaced (unless consumed) after every unloading. To save freight all alcohol was left behind and water was the only drink. On each boat were eight or nine soldiers and two or three boatmen or *voyageurs*, with sixty days' provisions for the inmates; and the boats were organised by companies (according to the old system probably ten boats to a company), and the captain was responsible for all the ammunition, equipment, stores, repairing tools, &c., of his company. On arriving at Fort Garry, the journey to which was reckoned at forty days, the two militia battalions were to form its garrison and the regular battalion, the 1/K.R.R.C., was to return to Canada. This latter provision compelled very exact observance of time, for if the regular battalion remained too late in the season, ice might form upon the lakes and render navigation impossible for boats of such light build.

Wolseley made all the calculations himself—a very severe bit of staff work. He started punctually on his appointed day, and men and officers soon became amazingly handy at the work. One officer in particular, Redvers Buller, caught Wolseley's eye for his uncommon dexterity as axeman, canoeman and boat repairer, as well as for his physical strength, for he shrank not from carrying a load of a hundredweight over a portage. By the time that they reached the descent of the Winnipeg river, the most dangerous section of the voyage, all ranks could take care of themselves. Men of long experience on the Canadian rivers were astounded that Wolseley's men should have risked so perilous an adventure, still more that they should have passed through it in safety. On the 23rd of August, the appointed day, Wolseley and his regular battalion, with the militia battalions close in rear, reached Fort Garry, to find the chief rebel's breakfast on the table, though the man himself had fled just in time. The fort was occupied by the militia, the rebellion was at an end, and within a week the King's Royal Rifles were on their way back to Canada by the same route. Despite of many wet bivouacs, every man of the force was healthy and well; despite of a thousand perils by land and water, not one life had been lost. It was a very remarkable achievement, wherein Wolseley had displayed great qualities both as designer and as leader.

He returned to England with a reputation deservedly enhanced, and was taken on to the Headquarters Staff at the Horse Guards. The times were very critical. Ever since 1815 the Army, especially the infantry, had been shamefully overworked. Parliament, with good reason and sound sense, was urgently bent upon economy after the frightful debt incurred during the long war against France; but it made no allowance for the maintenance of the new Empire which had been built up in the course of the struggle. The result was that practically three-fourths of the battalions of the line were always on foreign service, and sometimes even four-fifths. Regiments remained in India unrelieved for twenty years or more, and, when they returned home, were shipped abroad again within four years. Wolseley himself has written somewhere that the Duke of Wellington, wishing to keep soldiers out of sight and so to disarm the animosity of Parliament, hid the Army deliberately away in foreign stations. I do not know where he picked up this idea, but it is utterly fallacious. The bulk of the Army was sent abroad because there was work abroad for the whole of it; and the result had been to make the Service highly unpopular. When the Crimean War broke out, the battalions sent to the east under Lord Raglan were only made up to some semblance of strength by sweeping into their ranks every trained man from all the battalions and depôts in England. When these had been destroyed, as through the neglect of the Government they very quickly were, there was nothing left. The militia, which had been reconstituted on a voluntary basis in 1852, volunteered to take over the duty of some of the Mediterranean garrisons, thus liberating regular regiments for active service, and also furnished, under the temptation of a bounty, over thirty thousand recruits to the regular Army. But it was very evident that one and the same force could not for long empty its ranks into the Army and yet remain efficient; and the other recruits enlisted for the Crimean battalions were too often boys. Hardly was the Crimean War over than the Indian Mutiny broke out, which called nearly the whole of the Army to India. Meanwhile an effort had been made to form a reserve by allowing men to enlist for ten years with the option, at the conclusion of that term, of passing into an Army of Reserve, or of reengaging themselves for another eleven years. This was an abject failure, and after eight years' trial was in 1864 recognised to be such. Meanwhile the supply of recruits diminished steadily year by year, and the Army seemed likely to come to an end altogether. At last, in 1867, Parliament granted an increase of pay, which had long been overdue, to the soldier, and therewith recruits once again flocked to the Colours. But the problem of a reserve was not yet solved, in spite of some further petty experiments; and it was very evident that without some fundamental reform it never would be.

Then in 1870-1871 came events which startled the whole world. Germany, training the great bulk of her manhood for short periods and then relegating them to the reserve, encountered the professional Army of France, vanquished it within a month, and at the close of another six months held France abject at her feet. The sudden emergence of so great a military power was a serious matter for every state in Europe, not least for the weakest power, from a military point of view, of all. It was resolved to break with all the old traditions of Marlborough and Wellington, to enlist recruits in future for six years with the Colours and as many in reserve, and to abolish the purchase of commissions.

Among the most eager of the reformers in the Army itself was Wolseley; and, except among the few who thought with him, there was probably no more unpopular officer in the Service. In the first place, he was very young, still two years short of forty; in the second place, he had just published a little manual, 'The Soldier's Pocket-Book for Field Service,' for the instruction of officers, which contained many doctrines highly damnable in the sight of the old school; and in the third place, he was by no means disposed to hide his light under a bushel or to undervalue his own intellectual superiority. No one could deny that his career had been brilliant, but was that a reason why he should force his opinions down other men's throats? The truth is that Wolseley was highly impatient with the spirit of the British officer at large, who too often thought that his duties were bounded by the mastery of a few stereotyped parade movements and field movements, and that thereafter he was licensed to enjoy himself. That he would joyfully go upon active service, and that he would there behave himself with gallantry and devotion, was a matter of course, but Wolseley wished him—and rightly—to be equipped with knowledge also. He had seen too many bad officers in the field, general, staff and regimental, not to know how mischievous and dangerous they could be. Furthermore, Wolseley declined to admit the surpassing merit of the old soldier and of the rigid discipline which made him what he was; and here he stood upon very delicate ground.

The old long-service soldier was a relic of the days when a man was enlisted for life and kept in the ranks as long as he could stand upright, because, when he failed or died, the captain of his troop or company had to find a recruit to replace him at his own cost. Enlistment for life had long been obsolete, but the old treatment of the soldier remained the same. On his first voyage to India Wolseley observed with regret that none of the rank and file were allowed to go ashore at the Cape. This was accounted for by the old tradition that no liberty should be granted to the soldier lest he should desert and so defraud his captain. Another tradition, dating from the eighteenth century, was equally strong, that soldiers must be dressed like dolls and handled like puppets for the delight of their sovereigns' hearts. Not all the wars from Blenheim to Waterloo had sufficed to break this down.

Now Wolseley maintained that a soldier of three or four years' service, always provided that he were physically mature, was equal to the best. After all, as some great Frenchman said, "it is active service and not years of pirouetting in a barrack-yard that makes an old soldier." Wolseley had seen General Lee's army, and had actually witnessed a march-past of one division. The men were wretchedly clothed and worse shod. They had gone through no formalities of the goose-step and the like, which were deemed essential for the British soldier, and yet they were grand fighting men. It was doubtful, too, whether at any time there were so many soldiers of really long service—say of twelve years or upwards—in any British army as is supposed. The British soldiers of any description at the beginning of the war in 1793 were very few, and were speedily killed off in the West Indies. The rabble collected by Pitt in the following years also perished, mostly in the West Indies; and it was not until Pitt drew upon the militia for recruits in 1799 that the Army really began to take shape. A good many of these men were lost in Holland and Egypt, and when the war was renewed in 1803 the Ministry was still at its wits' end to fill the ranks.

There was another point, quickly realised by the reformers, though less so by the old school—namely, the revolution in the whole business of war owing to improved means of mobility, and the rapid development of missile weapons in the matters of range and accuracy.

In actual fact, they were advocating what amounted almost to a total reconstruction of the Army, and the old school, dimly perceiving what must come if the reformers prevailed, combated them with bitter animosity. There were, beyond doubt, great risks in the proposed changes if, by misfortune, a great war should burst out while they were still in progress; but it was imperative that the hazard should be accepted. Wolseley understood all these perils as well as any man, and was quite prepared to face them; but he was not so careful as he might have been to conceal his opinion that those who differed from him were fools.

He was still at the War Office, serving under his old Crimean chief, Sir Richard Airey, "the wisest and ablest soldier," as he afterwards wrote, "it was ever my lot to do business with," when he was called away to command a small expedition against the Ashantis on the Gold Coast. They were an enemy who had given us much trouble before, having destroyed a small British force in 1824, and prolonged hostilities for two years until finally quelled by a crushing victory in 1826. They had learned military discipline from ourselves, and had they been armed with as good weapons as the British, would have been practically unconquerable, for the climate would have forbidden the employment of any large force against them, even if it had been possible to obtain transport to feed it. Transport, indeed, was Wolseley's great difficulty. Only native carriers could be employed for the purpose, and they were both lazy and cowardly. Another most important consideration was that of time, for it was imperative that the operations should be concluded before the breaking of the rains. Wolseley, with a certain number of officers picked by himself, went to work in his usual methodical fashion, being careful to fortify his line of communications. His force of British troops consisted only of three battalions, but the maintenance of even so small a number gave anxiety enough. For once he was five days later than his appointed date in leaving his advanced base, but he was able to make up the lost time at the beginning of his advance, plunged into the "mid-day twilight" of the forest, fought two actions in the thick of it, repelled an attack upon his communications, and entered the Ashanti capital on the sixteenth day after starting, with only one day's rations in store. The Ashanti king then made his submission, and the expedition returned just in time, for the rainy season by chance had come on early. Wolseley himself had been on the west coast for about five months, most of his troops for two months less; but he himself suffered from a bad attack of fever, and not a few of his officers and men succumbed to the deadly climate. The killed and wounded, British and native, of all ranks numbered just under four hundred.

Wolseley described the whole business as the most horrible war that he was ever engaged in, but as it was wholly successful it was soon forgotten. All who served under him, however, agreed that no other man there would have had the nerve or the spirit to carry it through. His picked officers included George Colley, Evelyn Wood, Henry Brackenbury, Redvers Buller and Frederick Maurice, whose names soon became familiar to the public as those of the 'Wolseley Gang,' and shared in some measure their chief's unpopularity. But no one could deny their merit in their profession. He himself was knighted and promoted to the rank of Major-General.

In June 1874 he was again attached to the War Office as Inspector-General of the Auxiliary Forces, but within seven months he was sent out to Natal to compose differences between colonists and native tribes and to adjust some changes in the administration, thoroughly uncongenial work from which he was thankful after six months to be released. He was then called in November 1876 to the Council of India to advise on military matters, but before he had had time to make any mark on the Indian Army and Indian military policy was appointed in July 1878 to be first Governor of Cyprus, just made over to us by Turkey. In circumstances of great discomfort, for he had not for long so much as a roof over his head, he struggled to reduce Turkish misgovernment to something like order, and showed himself to be at least a careful and thrifty administrator. But he pined to return to his work as a soldier, and was gratified by a summons home in May 1879 to take command of the troops then engaged against the Zulus in South Africa. Owing to mismanagement a small column of British troops had been cut to pieces; and there had been something like a panic in England. Reinforcements had been hurried to the scene of action, but more needed even than these was a commander. Wolseley arrived in time only to complete the final stages of the struggle, after which he was called away to settle differences with the Transvaal. He made a very remarkable prophecy that the mineral wealth of the Transvaal would soon attract British settlers enough to outnumber the Boer population, and that it would be far better and cheaper to keep a small garrison in order to uphold the British annexation of the province and British authority therein than to risk more serious complications at a later day. Ministers would not listen to him, and the result was the Boer War of 1899-1902, costing many thousands of lives and scores of millions of money. South Africa has been called the grave of British reputations. It was not so to Wolseley, fortunately for him.

In May 1880 Wolseley returned to the War Office as Quartermaster-General. His reputation was increased, for wherever there had been a difficult task of any description to be done in any part of the Empire, he had been selected to perform it. But meanwhile the recent wars in Afghanistan and South Africa had shown the dangers of the transition from long to short service. Under the old system battalions might be weak, but were at least composed of men. Under the new system those at home were made up of boys, who succumbed very rapidly to the hardships of active service, and were not always too steady in action. The Zulu War had brought this fact very clearly to light, and Sir Frederick Roberts had emphasised it when treating of the Afghan War. Afghanistan is a trying climate for the most hardened soldiers, and such few young battalions as he had with him simply melted away. It became a question whether, with short service, an effective army could be maintained for the mere policing of the Empire; and, in fact, the two periods of enlistment were changed from six with the colours and as many with the reserve to seven or eight with the colours and five or four with the reserve. An increase of pay would, of course, have secured men instead of boys, but Parliament would never have accepted such a proposal. Another complication was that the first batches of discharged reservists did not readily find employment, but unfortunately did not lack sympathy from the many folks of the monied class who hated short service. Thus London just at that time swarmed with loafing reservists, who managed to live far too easily in idleness. The champions of the old system, notably the old Duke of Cambridge, who was Commander-in-Chief, naturally met Wolseley with a reproachful "I told you so"; and in fact the military reforms of 1870-71 were never in greater peril than when Wolseley took up the post of Quartermaster-General in 1880.

None the less Wolseley proceeded quite undismayed with the work which he had appointed for himself. The first step was the localisation of the regiments of infantry so that they might be more easily and methodically mobilised. Accordingly in 1881 the regiments that counted only one battalion were grouped together in pairs under a territorial designation, the old numbers were utterly abolished, and the facings, formerly so diverse, were made uniform, as white for English regiments, yellow for Scottish and green for Irish. The outcry was loud and prolonged. The regimental traditions, which were everything in the Army, were being ruthlessly destroyed and trodden underfoot. Old nicknames would cease to have a meaning. The old facings, dearly treasured by some corps, were a part of their existence, and without them the regiment would be naught. The new territorial titles were, some of them, ridiculously long and cumbrous. The districts allotted to some regiments were new and strange to them. Nor were these criticisms wholly without force. For more than two centuries regimental feeling alone had kept the British soldiery together. But it was precisely that state of things which Wolseley wished to change. He wished to convert a collection of regiments into an army, and he could see no other way of fulfilling his object. Examining the whole scheme by the light of regimental history, I confess that I am astonished at the care and tact displayed in pairing off the old single-battalioned regiments. Every sentiment and association which could help them to work kindly together were studied and utilised. But it was impossible to make willing yoke-fellows of all of them, and there were some ill-assorted couples which chafed against each other almost to the opening of the German war.

At the end of 1881 Wolseley, despite the opposition of the Duke of Cambridge, was appointed Adjutant-General and therewith took over a new sphere of authority. We who to-day know the post only as one of high importance on the Imperial General Staff, have forgotten the dignity that once belonged to it. In old days there was no Commander-in-Chief except in time of war. The sovereign still exerted some personal authority over the administration of the Army, and the Adjutant-General, who was the sovereign's own Adjutant-General, was the channel of communication between him or her and the Army. Those particular conditions had long since passed away, but were not quite forgotten either by Queen Victoria or the Duke of Cambridge, to say nothing of the novelty that the chief staff officer of the Army should still want two years of fifty.

By July 1882, however, a military revolt in Egypt called for British intervention to restore the Khedive's authority, and Wolseley was selected to command a force of about 25,000 men for the purpose. Even that small number could not be produced without calling up 12,000 from the first-class reserve, but the men were at any rate forthcoming. The British fleet had already bombarded Alexandria, where a few troops had been landed, and this well served Wolseley's purpose, for he had determined to make his base at Ismailia on the Suez Canal, where he would be within about thirty-five miles of the rebel leader's entrenched camp at Tel-el-Kebir. The only possible line of advance was a fresh-water canal which constituted the sole water supply, and which had been dammed up by the enemy at two different points. For transport there was a railway following the line of the canal, but little rolling-stock, and there was the canal itself which, since it sank daily lower, could carry only craft of very light draught. Furthermore, the accommodation at the port of Ismailia itself was so slight as to make the landing of supplies and stores a matter of great difficulty. Food and water, therefore, presented difficult problems, but none the less on the 24th of August—four days after the seizure of the Suez Canal—the first troops began to push forward along the fresh-water canal to demolish the enemy's dams and seize the first lock beyond them. There were some trifling actions, but little of any importance, until at length the removal of the dams improved the navigation of the fresh-water canal, and, with other help, enabled supplies and stores to be brought forward. On the night of the 12th-13th the entire force marched in order of battle across the desert, guided by a naval officer through observation of the stars; and by 6 A.M. on the following morning the entrenched camp had been stormed and the enemy was in full flight with the British cavalry in hot pursuit. By the evening of the next day the mounted troops had reached Cairo, sixty-five miles from the battlefield, and had received its surrender. The whole affair had been decided in a brief campaign of three weeks, and Wolseley returned home to be rewarded with a grant of £30,000, a barony and promotion to the rank of full General. He deserved it, for by cutting matters short he had saved many lives and much treasure. The casualties in killed and wounded did not amount to five hundred, though, in consequence of short rations and bad water, there was a good deal of sickness and not a few deaths after the fighting of the decisive action. But even so the price of success in human lives was not great, and the swift advance of the cavalry after the victory excited the admiration of every army in Europe.

Wolseley's energies were now concentrated on persuading the Government to keep a British garrison at Cairo and to entrust the re-creation of the Egyptian army to Sir Evelyn Wood and selected British officers. Meanwhile trouble had ever since 1881 been brewing in the Sudan, where a prophet had arisen and was rapidly mastering the whole country. The question arose whether it would not be better to evacuate the Sudan altogether; and General Gordon was sent out to review the situation and report his opinion. Gordon, who had been a close friend of Wolseley since Crimean days, accordingly left England in January 1884, and on the 18th of February arrived at Khartum. But meanwhile the state of things in the Sudan had changed greatly for the worse. The power of the prophet waxed continually; fresh tribes were drawn to his banner; he began to threaten even Upper Egypt; communication with Khartum was cut off; and in April Wolseley urged the need for organising an expedition without delay to advance to Gordon's relief by the valley of the Nile. For more than two months the Cabinet played with the question, until at last, at the beginning of August, it agreed that preparations should begin. Wolseley insisted upon skimming the cream of all the cavalry and of the seven battalions of Guards to form a camel corps, and in the first days of September rushed to Egypt. He had reckoned that Gordon could not hold out at Khartum later than the middle of November, so that there was not a day to spare.

Then followed a frantic and hopeless effort to overtake lost time. Sir Frederick Stephenson, the excellent officer on the spot, had declared that an advance up the Nile would be impossible owing to the frequent obstacles of cataracts. Wolseley, thinking rightly that it would be impossible to collect camels enough for an advance across two hundred and fifty miles of desert from the Red Sea at Suakim to the Nile at Berber, and remembering the Red River, pronounced unhesitatingly for the Nile valley. Eight hundred boats with a corps of *voyageurs* from Canada were accordingly bespoken; but this was only one item towards the solution of a terrible problem of transport and supply. From the base at Alexandria to the advanced base at Korti was a distance of fourteen hundred miles. Rather less than half the distance, from Alexandria to the first cataract, was covered in part by railway and wholly by steam navigation. There was a railway round the first cataract, then two hundred and forty miles more of steam navigation, a railway round part of the second cataract, and after that five portages across yet more cataracts. Altogether all goods would require to be loaded and unloaded sixteen times in the course of the journey; and the only means of carrying them across the portages was by means of camels.

Now a camel is supposed to be the same beast equal to the same duties wherever he may be. But this is not the fact. The camel of Sind or of India soon collapses in Afghanistan, and the camel of the Egyptian Delta is useless in the Egyptian desert. Wolseley knew that the hastening peril to Gordon might compel him to send a part of his force across the desert to Khartum instead of following the river all the way. Camels of all sorts, therefore, were required in great numbers, and the purchase of these was begun at once. In advance of himself Wolseley sent out an officer as Director of Transport, who was shortly afterwards followed by two companies of the Commissariat and Transport Corps. The officers of these last at once took up their duties at the various portages, and such as were unfamiliar with camels soon learned the ways of the beast. But they soon discovered that their men were impatient and unintelligent in the handling both of camels and drivers, and that only by unremitting personal attention could they save their animals from over-work and maltreatment and keep them in fair condition. They needed more expert officers who could be trained to the work, not useless privates; but no such officers were forthcoming. The Director of Transport, who was not an expert, did not improve matters. In the first place, he did not procure camels enough—only 8000, whereas at least 10,000 were needed, and 12,000 would not have been too many. Next, he improvised a transport company of officers and men, who had plenty of goodwill but no experience, and who wore out great numbers of camels by sheer ignorance of saddling and loading. Lastly, when the combatant camel corps came up, he allowed them to give any enfeebled animals of their own to the Commissariat Companies and to take in exchange the camels which the Commissariat officers had been nursing so carefully to bring forward food for the troops. This was false policy, for a soldier, mounted or afoot, is useless without food.

Wolseley, having a thousand other matters to attend to, probably never heard of all these details. Chafing with impatience, he had hurried up the river to Dongola, which he quitted on the 13th of December for his advanced base at Korti. There he decided that the danger to Gordon was too urgent to allow him to send his whole force by boat up the river, and that he must divide it and despatch a column of about 1800 fighting men across the great bend of the Nile to Metammeh, whence it should descend the river to Khartum. This signified a march of about one hundred and fifty miles across the desert, which, owing to the disappointment of some of his expectations, became a very serious matter. He had looked for a supply of camels from Dongola itself. None were forthcoming; and the result was that he had not transport enough to carry the entire column across the desert at one time. There was, however, abundant water at Jakdul, about one hundred miles on the way to Metammeh, and thither he sent two convoys of supplies, leaving some of the escorting troops behind at Jakdul. This was successfully done, but it meant much additional work for the camels, which naturally suffered greatly in condition.

The final advance of the desert column took place on the 14th of January 1885. Wolseley longed to accompany it himself, but was forbidden by orders from home; and he therefore entrusted it to Sir Herbert Stewart, a very capable officer and a man to whom he was greatly attached. The rest of the story is well known. The desert column after two sharp actions, in the second of which Stewart was mortally wounded, duly reached the Nile, only to learn that Khartum had been captured and Gordon slain by the followers of the prophet. The week of suspense which Wolseley endured until he heard the news was the most intolerable that he ever spent; and the tidings of its failure struck him very hard as a man as well as a commander, for in Gordon and Stewart he had lost his dearest friends in the world. For a brief space the Government in London talked of prosecuting the operations and rescuing the Sudan from the false prophet, but soon found a pretext for evacuating the country. The desert column remained on the Nile until the 15th of February, when it retreated under constant pressure from the enemy to Korti. By that time it was necessary to dismount the whole of the camel corps, over 1200 strong, and to take their beasts for purposes of general transport. The river column, which had made very satisfactory progress, was also recalled. Lingering in Egypt only to make final arrangements for the protection of the much contracted southern frontier, Wolseley in the autumn of 1885 returned to England.

He was weary and chagrined. He had sustained the first check in a career of hitherto unbroken success, and he felt it not the less because he knew that the fault lay not with him, but with the Cabinet, whose vacillation had denied him adequate time for preparation. It was marvellous that he should have accomplished so much as he did in the few months granted to him. But it was the camel that beat him. His instinct led him rightly to distrust the camel and to rely upon river transport. Had the Government made up its mind, as it should have done, two months earlier, he could have brought up the whole of his troops by water and would hardly have needed more than 1500 or 2000 camels. Even if mischance had forced him to cross the desert, there would have been time to train officers and men to learn the ways of the camel, and there would have been far less strain upon the transport. As things were, everything had to be hurriedly improvised. The Director of Transport, perhaps pardonably, was unequal to his duties. There was a waste of camel flesh which with better management might have been avoided. The desert column was in consequence inadequately equipped; its movements were delayed; and thus it reached the Nile too late. The death of Herbert Stewart and of Colonel Burnaby, whom Wolseley had selected for second-in-command, was a stroke of misfortune which did not help matters. But the task set to Wolseley by the Cabinet was so difficult that the least touch of bad luck sufficed to make it impossible. He had done all that man, in the circumstances, could do; and the Government recognised it by giving him the Order of St Patrick, which was presently supplemented under a new administration by a viscountcy.

He returned to the War Office saddened and a little aged, but with unabated energy, and during the following years did some of his best work. He made the Intelligence Department something worthy of its name, setting Sir Henry Brackenbury at the head of it, while Redvers Buller, as Quartermaster-General, began the work which was to end in the formation of the Army Service Corps. He put new life into the Staff College; he fought strenuously for selection as against seniority in the promotion of officers, and he spoke his mind as to the uselessness of parade drill and the mischief of party government to the Army with a freedom which offended both the Duke of Cambridge and Ministers. But his words so stirred the public that a commission under the chairmanship of Lord Hartington was appointed to inquire into the whole question of national defence; and he was able to put forward views of which some have been already translated, while others still await fulfilment, into action. The old and eternal struggle between the politicians and the military authorities for military patronage showed itself constantly—an unequal struggle, for the politicians had always the sympathy of their fellows in Parliament, and could take by sheer force what they could not claim by right and commonsense. Wolseley was before his time in trying to rid the Army of the evils of party government, yet party government is now so discredited that this very desirable end may not be far out of sight. A beginning has at least been made of placing administrative departments under the control of non-political boards. Democracy seems to have the knack of bringing politics and politicians into general mistrust and contempt.

After prolongation of his term as Adjutant-General for two years beyond the usual length of tenure, Wolseley left the War Office in 1890. Some pressure was put upon him to accept the chief command in India in succession to Sir Frederick (afterwards Lord) Roberts, but he declined the offer, saying that if any danger threatened India, "Roberts, with his long experience of India, would be the best man to meet it, and that if not, he, Wolseley, would be more useful at home." The public, weary of the talk of "our only general," had set up Roberts in its own mind as a rival to Wolseley, and there were, in fact, considerable and legitimate differences of opinion between the two men. Roberts, very keenly alive to the importance of having mature men only in the garrison of India, was not too friendly yet to short service. As a matter of fact, at that period the only place where a real British battalion of the line could be seen was in India, those at home being composed of mere boys, who would be drafted out to India as soon as they were grown up. It was no fault of Wolseley that only boys could be obtained as recruits. He desired full-grown men as much as Roberts, but if Parliament would not pay for them, he must be content with boys. In due time Roberts, as was inevitable, became a hearty convert to short service, but that time was not yet. Again, in the matter of Indian frontier defence, Roberts was an advocate of the "forward policy," which would secure the Afghan passes into India, whereas Wolseley, following Lord Lawrence, would have been content with the Indus for boundary. Any deviation from the lines laid down by Roberts in India would consequently have been attributed to jealousy, and Wolseley's position as Commander-in-Chief there would have been difficult and invidious. He could have done little good, and eager partisanship whether for or against him might have done much harm. He was resolute, therefore, in his refusal to go to India, and much preferred to take the command in Ireland.

He was by this time mellowed and softened. Even his personal appearance was changed. During the hottest of the struggle for Army Reform he had affected, for some reason, the fashion of a long, very elaborately waxed moustache, which had been introduced by the third Napoleon. He now wore a short moustache, like any other British soldier, and certainly gained by the change. The Army likewise was settling down as the old traditions of purchase, long service, numbered regiments and endless variety of facings gradually died away. Officers were beginning to take their profession more seriously, and already were realising that, if they wished for real advancement, the road lay through the Staff College. Recognising that the victory of Army Reform was nearly won, Wolseley became less aggressive and more sympathetic, emphasising as heartily as any the value of regimental *esprit de corps* which he had been reputed to despise. He worked with all his old vigour at the training of his troops in the business of war, and especially at the education of the officers ; but he supplemented this with a hospitality as genial as it was profuse. He had still to meet in 1891 a last feeble attack upon short service, and he had not yet wrested from the Duke of Cambridge the principle of selection in lieu of seniority for the promotion of officers ; but the progress of reform had been so steady that, though much remained to be done, he could look forward with some confidence to the future. In 1894 he was promoted to the rank of Field-Marshal, and a year later he was appointed honorary Colonel of the Blues, a post which had been granted to Wellington in the course of the Peninsular War, and was therefore of traditional dignity.

In 1894 Mr Campbell-Bannerman, an extremely good administrator, took the reorganisation of the War Office in hand, and it was arranged that the Duke of Cambridge should retire from the Commandership-in-Chief, which he had held for more than thirty years. The poor old gentleman was not a little hurt. He had worked hard and conscientiously for the Army, and hoped at least that he would be allowed to withdraw himself from it of his own free will. Mr Campbell-Bannerman had not chosen Wolseley for his successor, so that any bitterness that might have arisen upon his appointment was spared alike to Wolseley and to the Duke. They had been fundamentally opposed to each other on the question of Army Reform, and had fought many a battle over it, but each had an honest and genuine respect for the other, and, apart from military differences, they were on very cordial terms. Before any appointment could be made the Liberal Party suffered a defeat in Parliament. The Government resigned ; Lord Salisbury came into office ; and Wolseley found himself after all Commander-in-Chief on the 8th of August 1895.

Then matters began to go forward in earnest, and in 1898 Wolseley was able to say that the Army could mobilise two Army Corps for embarkation before the Admiralty could furnish ships on which to embark them. But he very soon discovered that the real Commander-in-Chief was the Secretary of State at the War Office for the time being, who claimed the right to summon any individual of the Commander-in-Chief's staff to advise him and to act upon his advice without consultation with the chief himself. Thus he found himself in a false position, "the fifth wheel of the coach," as he expressed it, an official whose authority was subject to arbitrary limits, yet upon whom the Secretary of State could palm off responsibility for his own shortcomings. During the earlier years of Wolseley's term of office the situation in South Africa became clearly more menacing, and Wolseley pressed for additional strength, especially in artillery, to the Army at large, and for reinforcement of the British garrisons in Cape Colony and Natal. Throughout the greater part of the nineteenth century, it must be repeated, from three-fourths to four-fifths of the British battalions had been employed abroad, and only very recently had the old principle of the Duke of York — that there should always be one battalion at home to every one oversea —been more or less observed. But in 1896 there were seventy-six battalions abroad and only sixty-five at home, and we were gradually reverting to the state of things which by 1866 had threatened the Army with dissolution. By assiduous urgency Wolseley succeeded in gaining some increase to the strength of the Army; but nothing would induce Ministers to send a respectable force to South Africa. They were afraid of the cost, and they dreaded lest they should be accused of aggression, though if the Boers were to throw out a challenge, they were prepared to accept it. Wolseley, on the other hand, maintained that if a respectable and efficient force were quietly moved at once to South Africa, the Boers would hesitate to provoke a trial by arms and that war might be averted altogether. But not one British Minister in fifty has the insight to accept such a point of view, and not one in a hundred has the courage to act upon it. Castlereaghs, unfortunately, are rare.

As the prospect grew darker in the early months of 1899, Wolseley again pressed upon the Cabinet the imperative need of preparation, since a war with the Boers would be a very serious matter. The Intelligence Department had drawn up a very accurate statement of the force which the Boers could put into the field, and, laying this before the Cabinet, he urged that an Army Corps and a Cavalry Division should be mobilised in June and held ready for emergency. In August he once more brought forward the question; but not until the 9th of October was the order for mobilisation given. The results of the order exceeded the most sanguine expectations, the reservists presenting themselves punctually, with a percentage of absentees far smaller than had been allowed for by the military authorities. They were, moreover, fine men and remarkably sober and steady. But they were sent out too late. By the end of October the small British force in Natal was beleaguered in Ladysmith and the colony lay open to Boer invasion. Wolseley thereupon earnestly advocated the immediate mobilisation of a second Army Corps, but this was not completed until three successive reverses in the second week of December had reduced Ministers to abject fright. Wolseley upon receipt of the bad news had at once advocated the despatch of more troops and the raising of levies from every branch of the auxiliary forces; and his scheme was expanded until the army in South Africa vastly exceeded in numbers any that Britain had hitherto sent beyond sea. But the Government, despite of many manifestations of hostile feeling on the Continent, would give no attention to Wolseley's plans for defence against possible invasion until he actually sent in his resignation. Meanwhile Lord Roberts, who had been sent out to command in South Africa, by September 1900 advanced to the uttermost boundaries of the Transvaal, and was disposed to believe that the war was over. As Wolseley's term of the command-in-chief expired in November 1900, the Government recalled Roberts to take his place, and Wolseley's military career therewith came to an end.

He made, however, yet one prominent appearance when in March 1901 he, in the House of Lords, exposed the defects of the existing military administration. He did so temperately, attacking no individual but only the system. In reply the Secretary for War, after a perfunctory defence of the indefensible, deviated into a bitter personal attack upon Wolseley, reproaching him for neglect of the auxiliary forces, and particularly for his omission to point out that Ladysmith was a bad position and that more than one Army Corps would be required to subdue the South African Republics. Wolseley, thereupon, moved with perfect dignity and temper for all papers bearing on the subject, which the Government found easy pretexts for refusing; and therewith Wolseley held his peace and waited for time to vindicate him, not in vain.

The truth seems to be that British Ministers cannot or will not learn either to manage war properly themselves or to allow anyone else to manage it properly for them. At one period of the great struggle with Napoleon Ministers consulted several Generals as to the number of troops that would be required to ensure the safety of Sicily. One said 10,000, another 15,000, a third 20,000, giving their reasons. Sir John Moore answered curtly to this effect: "Remove that rotten Bourbon Government, and you will need no troops at all; support it, as you have done hitherto, and only an indefinite number will make Sicily safe." This reply was not at all well received; but it was after all the right one. After some hesitation and delay the Bourbon Government was removed and all was well. Wolseley was in much the same case as Moore: "If you wish to negotiate with the Boers, your best way of compassing your object is to mobilise an Army Corps at once." But such counsel is rejected because it is considered to lie outside a soldier's province.

With his final retirement from the War Office Wolseley disappeared into the background. Soldiers of an older time might have been able to show a greater length of actual service, but few could match the extent and variety of his labours during forty-eight strenuous years. He occupied himself with literary work, writing an incomplete biography, which was not the most successful of his books. In truth he did not shine as an author, for, though he could describe scenes which he had actually witnessed with spirit and vivacity, he was always apt to be wordy and discursive, with a tendency to a little too much moralising and preaching. It is none the less a pity that he did not finish the story of his life, for it would have been interesting to possess his own impressions of his last campaigns. But he enjoyed his rest. Anticipating what has now become a common practice, he converted an old farmhouse on the Sussex downs into a residence for himself and delighted in the quiet and beauty of the country. Later he occupied apartments at Hampton Court, which were more congenial to Lady Wolseley than himself; and those who have lived in or about the palace can understand why, despite of the beauty of the buildings and the charm of the garden. Gradually his memory failed, and realising that age was wrecking him, he with the instinct of all flesh studiously hid himself away. He died at Mentone on the 26th of March 1913, within a few weeks of his eightieth birthday and within fifteen months of the great struggle for which throughout his life he had been preparing the British Army.

I never met him but once, but perhaps my brief experience of him may help to show what manner of man he was. It was, I think, in the summer of 1898 that we were both of us members of a fairly large party invited by the late Lord Brownlow to Ashridge from Saturday to Monday. I was far too diffident to approach him myself, but it chanced that at luncheon on Sunday he told the story of John Richards at Alicante, which apparently had only just come to his knowledge. I listened with all my ears, hoping for new light upon a famous episode, but he gave only bald facts, not too accurately, and was uncertain as to the date. With some timidity I supplied it—1709—which made him look with some astonishment at me; and he then wondered whether Richards had left a widow and whether anything had been done for her. I answered that she had received a special pension from Queen Anne herself. The general conversation then took another turn, but directly we rose from table Lord Wolseley made straight for me and asked how I came to know these details. He was so kindly and sympathetic that before long I found myself confessing timidly that I had begun to write a history of the Army. He at once plunged into the question of my material, and when I told him that I had already spent months in the

Record Office over manuscripts which had seldom if ever been looked at before, I realised at once that he was one who knew the meaning and value of drudgery. So we talked on until we were all summoned to a walk in the park, throughout which he kept me alone with him, pursuing the old subject through all its ramifications and only breaking off from time to time when our attention was distracted by the beauty of the country and the noble beech-trees for which Ashridge is famous. Erect, natty, active and alert, he had an appearance of youth which was not belied by the eagerness with which he seized upon anything new that I could tell him. All that was written in books he knew already. His range of historical reading was very wide and his memory evidently tenacious. On returning to the house, I found that he had a quick eye for any remarkable picture or beautiful piece of furniture, though I judged that his taste was severe and inclined always in favour of simplicity. Altogether he struck me as a man of perfectly charming manners and of extensive knowledge far outside his profession.

It was his misfortune never to meet a worthy foeman as a commander in the field, so that his gifts as a leader in what the French call *la grande guerre* were never put to the test. But it was outside his many campaigns, distinguished though he was in all of them, that he rendered his best service to the country. He went into action for the first time leading men who were armed with muzzle-loading muskets, fired indeed with a percussion cap instead of the old flint, but otherwise not very different from the muskets used in the Peninsular War. In the Crimea the Minie rifle, also a muzzle-loader, supplanted this old-fashioned weapon, and all artillery was, of course, loaded by the muzzle, though the Lancaster siege-gun had the (for the time) extraordinary range of five thousand yards. In China breech-loading field-guns were used for the first time, and in 1867 came the first breech-loading rifle. Then improvements came with a rush, culminating, before Wolseley had left the active list, in magazine rifles, the Maxim machine-gun, quick-firing field-pieces and high-explosive shell. Through all these rapid changes Wolseley kept abreast of the times. Short service and the abolition of purchase had declared themselves to be inevitable before he came prominently upon the scene, but he was one of the few who struggled to accomplish them speedily. The Army was hampered by the old traditions of the eighteenth century when sovereigns dressed their soldiers for display. The French revolutionary armies shook themselves free from these trammels for a time, but reverted to them under Napoleon's Empire. Moreover, the fancy dress of a soldier was held to be—and, in fact, actually was—an inducement to recruits. Wolseley pointed out that in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries the soldier's dress differed little except in colour from that of the ordinary citizen, and that the soldier should be sensibly clad for his real business—that of war—more like a gamekeeper than a mountebank. Of course, in the days of primitive firearms, distinction of colour was useful for discriminating friends from enemies; but with the advent of weapons of long range this advantage disappeared. Therefore he urged common-sense in the matter of clothing, and, as a temptation to recruits, the substitution of better pay, better food and better treatment for the soldier. It is rather comical that he dared not do away with scarlet for the Egyptian campaign of 1882, though he replaced the tight tunics by loose serge jackets. Shortly afterwards khaki, first used in the Indian Mutiny, came into its own, and when the first troops were sent out to South Africa in 1899, it never occurred to the public that they should not be dressed in khaki.

In the matter of training likewise Wolseley was far in advance of his time; but his greatest work here was the better education of officers. Improvement was at first but slow, but it gathered speed continuously. When he entered the Army, many regiments depended entirely upon their Colonels and Adjutants for instruction, and not a few only upon the Adjutant. The remainder of the officers were content to master a few parade movements and field movements without thought of their practical application to the business of war. There were a few exceptions in the battalions which had been trained by Sir John Moore at Shorncliffe and which had preserved his rule that every captain must instruct his company. There was always an exception in the artillery, too, where every subaltern of a battery had his own charge of two guns. But, speaking generally, the commanding officer and the Adjutant did most of such work as was done, and there were some very bad commanding officers. All of this it was Wolseley's mission to change; and when it is remembered that, under the purchase system, there were traditions of proprietary rights and of the independence belonging thereto, among officers of all grades, it is not surprising that the process took time.

Moore is, I think, the British soldier of mark with whom he had most in common. Like Wolseley, Moore distinguished himself in his very first action as a mere boy. He was from the first an enthusiastic soldier and yet a highly cultivated man. He was constantly employed and frequently wounded. He was original in his ideas, in advance of his time in the matter of training, and as exacting as the practice of his time permitted towards officers. It was his custom never to listen to the intercession of officers on behalf of men found guilty of crime by court-martial, arguing that, if men behaved badly, it was the fault of the officers, who would learn to do their duty the better when they found that a soldier must suffer for their neglect. Above all, Moore had, like Wolseley, the failing of too great readiness of criticism and of intellectual contempt. Gentle old Ralph Abercromby once rebuked Moore for this, and I think it possible that Sir Hope Grant may have done the same for Wolseley, judging from the respect and affection with which Wolseley always speaks of his old chief. Physically, perhaps, Moore had the advantage, the handsomest man in the Army, a magnificent animal, a fine horseman and an indefatigable walker. Wolseley had not the jaw and chin that would be expected in so resolute a man, but he also was decidedly on the athletic side. Both were temperate and clean livers; both had mothers whom they adored; and both commanded complete devotion and confidence from those about them.

Beyond all question the Army owes more to Wolseley than to any soldier since Wellington. The Duke had to make an army, with all of its auxiliary services, in the field, and it took him four years—thanks not a little to the pedantry of Parliament—to perfect it. Wolseley had to re-create an army—not as Wellington left it, for Wellington's work was destroyed before Waterloo, only partially restored during the occupation of France, and thereafter allowed to go to ruin. Such traditions as had endured since Wellington's time were for the most part a hindrance rather than a help to him. Wolseley had even to assail, for the sake of organisation, the most precious relic of old days, exclusive regimental pride. Yet within twenty years he was able to send abroad by far the most powerful, and best trained, and best equipped force that we had ever sent beyond sea. Even then there were many of his reforms still unaccomplished. Some have been fulfilled since. Others, such as the uniting of War Office and Admiralty under a single Minister, still await fulfilment. After the South African War, which was of priceless value to us for the great struggle that was to come, we were fortunate in producing a Minister for War—the greatest since Castlereagh—who put the finishing touches to his work; but it was Wolseley who by indefatigable toil, persistence and courage added to very great ability, had reared the structure which was perfected by Lord Haldane. When we recall the incomparable little British Expeditionary Force of 1914, let us do justice to a great soldier, a great public servant and a great man; and while we speak of it affectionately as the Old Contemptibles, let us think of it as Wolseley's Army.

MOMO AND I.

BY FRANK HIVES.

LOOKING back, it would be difficult to say off-hand what first attracted me to Momo. It may have been his cheerful air of alertness, the smartness with which he wore his police constable uniform, or the alacrity with which he came to attention. His soldierly alertness was partly accounted for by the fact that before enlisting in the Nigerian Police he had served in the German Cameroons and had been drilled, and efficiently drilled. It may, on the other hand, have been the unusually frank and fearless expression of his face, the keenness in his eyes, and the infectiousness, even for a native, of his expansive ever-ready grin. He seemed to be able to switch it on like an electric torch. He always appeared to be in excellent spirits, even in depressing circumstances, the native counterpart of Mark Tapley, who, facially, has a good deal in common with the Cheshire cat. Otherwise he was rather undersized in appearance but as hard and flexible as a bit of wire rope. He always struck me as the type of man whom it might be useful to have at hand in a tight place.

Finally, it may have been one of those curious subconscious premonitions for which I do not propose to offer any theory, because it is always easy to say that they only occur after the event.

I was at the time District Officer in charge of the northernmost district in the southern provinces of Nigeria which marched peacefully with the German Cameroons, and had previously served on the Anglo-German Boundary Commission, delimiting the frontier, and thereby removing any possible local bones of contention. It did no doubt occur to me subconsciously that, as Momo knew well the country and the bush tracks on both sides of the frontier, and also the ways of the Germans, this local knowledge might on occasion prove useful, but I cannot remember that I gave it much thought. The main inducement was that I liked the man and was glad to have him about me, so I made him my orderly to be able to lay my hands on him if I should want him, and an excellent orderly he was, alert, obliging and always cheerful. In fact I could not have had a better body servant.

Why Momo had left the German service was, like most of his antecedents before I came into contact with him, when he must have been about thirty, always rather 'wropt in mystry.' I gathered he had come in for some pretty rough handling, and I suspect—a suspicion I was careful not to verify—had not stood on the order of his going but simply went. He certainly knew enough of German military manners and methods to have acquired a lasting distaste for them, but he was not, perhaps for reasons of his own, communicative on the subject. Nor was there much information to be gleaned about his ancestry. Personally I believed that he was a native of Sierra Leone, not of any of the local tribesfolk, and had probably been taken by his people into the Cameroons when he was quite young, but his memories of his early days were very hazy. Momo had some characteristics, among others his absolute trustworthiness, that distinguished him favourably from the general run of natives. From the outset I always felt sure that Momo would never let me down, and he came to develop an implicit faith in 'my strong juju,' in other words in my capacity, whether by luck or good management, for getting out of a tight corner if we happened to be in one. This unshakable confidence in my leadership proved a valuable asset before we had to part company.

At the end of July 1914 my district headquarters were about twenty miles from the German border, and a full company of W.A.F.F.'s was stationed there. We were carrying on in the usual way of business. There were rumours, of course, of tension in high places and unrest in international politics, but they seemed too remote to have any personal bearing on us here in the depths of West Africa. Then O.C. troops received confidential instructions, which he communicated to me, to be prepared for active service conditions at short notice. At that date, of course, none of us dreamt that war was at the door. After talking the possible significance of it over with the O.C. I decided to inspect that part of my district nearest the Cameroons. I arrived at this decision on the general principle of look-see, and also to ascertain whether there was any news of unusual activity on the German side. Here I thought Momo's opinion might be of value because he had first-hand knowledge of their routine methods. Apart from him, I had only three native police when I made camp just outside a native village about four miles from the border. I had a confabulation with the village elders, but could find no indication that there was anything unusual afoot on the other side. Had there been it was sure to have reached the chiefs' ears, because news between the natives travels very quickly in Africa, and their methods of conveying information by drumming or 'talking' through antelope or other horns are quite as efficient and often more trustworthy than those of most news distributing agencies.

Everything certainly seemed to betoken undisturbed peace far and wide; it was a beautiful unruffled evening with a full moon rising slowly and flooding the distant hills in silver. But, to make assurance doubly sure, I asked the chief to 'drum up' some friends in a village about six miles within the German territory close to Bashu, the nearest German station. It was an artless little message, just to 'pass the time of day' and would they drop in for a little dance on the following evening but one. *R.S.V.P.* Just as a householder in Hampstead might ring up a friend at Streatham and arrange a game of bridge. I felt sure that if anything out of the common were toward the news would be passed on, together with the reply to the invitation. It would have to be relayed through the two villages, as through exchanges intervening between Hampstead and our friends in Streatham.

I listened to our drum 'calling up' the nearest village, the prompt acknowledgment (quite as prompt as that of the exchange operator in a peevish mood), and our message in process of transmission. I would have given a good deal to have been able to follow it or decode it, but my interpreter, being a stranger in these parts, was not conversant with this particular 'drum talk.' I heard the drum in the adjoining village repeat the invitation, pass it on, and within an hour the answer came to hand.

It was to the effect, so the chief told me, that all was well in Streatham, and that they would be glad to accept our invitation for Wednesday evening, provided the German officer in charge of the station raised no objection, not that they apprehended any difficulty. I heard that there were six German soldiers at Bashu: one white man, evidently the N.C.O. in charge, and five natives. I deduced from this, and Momo confirmed it from what he knew of German military methods, that if there were any immediate cause for apprehension, this small party would not be left lying about in a remote out-of-the-way outpost.

But that same evening about nine o'clock, when I was beginning to feel like turning in, the interpreter brought in a native runner from headquarters with a letter from O.C. troops. His orders had been to run all the way and to deliver the letter in the shortest possible time. Leaving Momo to see to the runner's comfort, I took the letter into my tent and did not open it till I was alone. I felt convinced it contained news of vital importance. "War has been declared with Germany," were the first words that met my eye and burnt themselves into my brain. So that was that. The peace of the evening that had impressed me so deeply had been deceptive. We were up against the real thing. We were at war. Detailed orders that followed left no doubt about it. All troops at my station were to proceed to a spot indicated on the Upper Cross River and join up with others concentrating there. The writer would be glad if I could return forthwith to speed their departure.

Obviously there was hurry toward. Within half an hour I had struck camp, packed our loads, and, with staff and carriers, was on my way back to the station. Fortunately it was a brilliant moonlight night and the path was good. I offered no explanation for my sudden change of plan, but the natives have given up attempting to account for the vagaries of the white man's movements and took it all in their stride. Only it struck me that there was an unusual glint—it may have been the effect of the moonlight—in Momo's dark eyes and in the exceptional buoyancy of his expansive grin. I fancy he could have given a pretty accurate guess as to the contents of my letter and for the reason behind our hurried departure. But for the matter of that the whole crowd were cheery enough, although they had covered sixteen miles and they had another sixteen, with only one short breather on the way, back to headquarters, where we arrived at 2.30 A.M. All was quiet enough, so I just had my bed put up and flung myself down on it as I stood, to snatch a short rest.

Two hours later all was bustle and movement. O.C. troops had let no grass grow under his feet. The two hundred carriers it took to move the company, mobilised overnight by my Assistant District Officer, were beginning to arrive. All packs and equipments had been made up the day before and by six o'clock the column was on the move. Quick work! But war was already in the air. One did not realise it at the time, of course, but of the fighting men we saw off in such high spirits that morning, very few returned.

Apart from myself and my Assistant the garrison was now made up only of my A.D.C., the interpreter, twelve police constables and a handful of disconsolate sick soldiers, too ill to march. I became feverishly restless. I felt I was being wasted. I knew the lie of the land unusually well; I had been stationed in the district for over a year and had on several occasions crossed the frontier as the guest, for the week-end, of the German Commissioner. I was galled at being left behind, and, feeling that my 'very strong juju' had let me down, I wrote off in haste to the Resident for leave to join up at once, because I knew every yard of the boundary line, since, as I reminded him, I had been attached as Political Officer to the Commission that had demarcated it three years previously.

I despatched the letter at once by a constable on a bicycle with strict orders not to waste any time. He had to cover forty miles on a road that made no pretensions to rivalling the surface of a racing track, so I had to make up my mind to possess my soul in patience until the following morning, though Momo hung about unobtrusively as if he, too, were expecting news. About ten o'clock the following morning the answer arrived. It was in the negative; application turned down. The compliment that my services were more valuable in a civilian capacity did little to temper the bitterness of my disappointment. Two days later, on renewed application, His Excellency gave me orders to report to the military authorities at the base for duty, as I had been attached as Intelligence Officer to the column. In Momo's eyes my 'juju' stock recovered with a bound.

It did not take me long to hand over to my Assistant, nor did I waste time over my kit and equipment. Momo must have had his ready for all emergencies. He seemed to take it for granted that, whoever went with me or stayed behind, he would go. As a matter of fact I took only one personal servant to act as cook, steward and bottle-washer, but I wangled Momo through as my orderly 'attached Intelligence.' I knew that he would be as good as, indeed a good deal better than, an additional servant. Momo had no intention of being left out if there were any scrapping to be had. I had always felt he was a fighting man born and bred.

Four days later I reported for duty at the concentration base and received instructions to report to the O.C. of an advanced detachment in camp on the German boundary some twenty miles up the Cross River. The rains had set in—had set in with a vengeance, a heavy, continuous, tropical downpour that never stopped except for an hour or so. Cross River was, of course, in flood, and this was obliging of it, because it enabled me to make my destination by a small steam-launch. I was travelling light, only two loads, the inevitable 'chop box' with some tinned foodstuffs, my folding camp bed, and a bath fitted with a lid that furnished a convenient receptacle for kit and miscellaneous gadgets. My armament consisted of a sporting 3·03 magazine rifle, a 4·50 revolver, and plentiful reserves of ammunition for both. I have never believed in running short of ammunition.

On my arrival at my objective I learned that the main body had advanced into German territory, had taken a German station, but were sitting down there to think things over, not to have to admit that they were held up. After arriving early in the afternoon, and after (I cannot say enjoying) a cold and damp collation, I received orders to proceed inland and attach myself to another forlorn outpost about nine miles away. This was our most advanced detachment, and embodied the idea on the part of the battle-thinkers that it served to check any attempt on the side of the enemy to advance on that bank of the Cross River. My instructions were to glean all and every scrap of information regarding the strength, disposition and movements of the German forces opposing us, and to send in my reports from day to day. I appreciated from the outset that these orders were easier to give than to carry out, but orders were orders, and the eye of Intelligence has the reputation for being all-seeing. So I got a move on.

On reaching my objective, soaked to the skin—it had, of course, poured all day,—late in the afternoon, our camp impressed me as one of the most dismal woebegone spots it had ever been my lot to strike in a fairly wide range of experience. We, the European officers and men, were occupying the cramped outlying bush houses of a small and extraordinarily filthy village. All the roofs leaked, and we were up to our ankles in mud. We had all the discomforts of a home under active service conditions. I have heard a lot, if I have had no personal experience, of Flanders mud, and it may have peculiarly adhesive qualities of its own, but I still venture to think that Nigerian mud is, for sheer discomfort, hard to beat. Our food supplies contributed little to raise our morale. Roasted yams and plantains furnished their main staple, varied occasionally by a very stringy ascetic fowl. It was in this environment, I believe, that I first appreciated the quality of Momo's Mark Tapley spirits to its full value. He grinned at everything, at the sullen skies, the perennial dampness, the all-pervading mud, even at the drumstick of an athletic rooster.

In the meanwhile the work of Intelligence Department had pretty well reached a deadlock. The little information I contrived to gather I regarded with profound distrust. Patrolling within a radius of a few miles of our Slough of Despond was so much waste of time and energy. It only made us wetter still. The friendly natives I sent out to gather news of the enemy movements regaled us with fiction very sparsely interlarded with fact. Momo suggested (he probably knew their little ways) that after pouching their pay, they slouched out into the bush for a mile or two, sat down on their hunkers and gave their imagination (he called it mendacity, *tout court*) free play, and I am inclined to think he was right. Whenever I felt particularly damp and depressed Momo was as comforting as a cocktail. For I was at times inclined to take a pessimistic view of the situation as a whole. It seemed to me to be like everything else, as unstable as mud. We failed to gather any trustworthy news of the enemy, whereas he might at any moment obtain some about us; in this case it would be easy for him to organise a night attack and to wipe us out, because our camp had no defences worth mentioning. I entertained a deep-seated objection to being wiped out, more especially by the Germans. I am free to confess that at this juncture I kept a haversack, packed for emergencies, within easy reach. It contained a box of matches, securely wrapped up to keep dry—a tip from my pioneering days in Australia,—a reserve supply of ammunition for rifle and revolver, some tobacco (this I admit was a concession to the weakness of the flesh), a small bottle of meat extract that served as an emergency ration, a few water biscuits and some slices of roasted yam. I might at any moment have to travel lighter still, but I was not going to be caught napping. Momo, grinning more expansively than ever, stuck to me like a shadow. I have no doubt he had an emergency haversack of his own.

I am not prepared to state whether the suggestion emanated from Momo or not, but it suddenly occurred to me—I am subject to these brain waves—that if we failed to obtain information through the 'usual channels,' which looked as if they, like everything else, were waterlogged, why not go looksee for ourselves. I put this brilliant suggestion before our O.C., who did not receive it with enthusiasm. He poured cold water on it, as if things were not damp enough. He declined to permit me to go out 'looking for trouble' alone, even chaperoned by Momo. Who the blazes was Momo, anyway? It was only when he saw I was bordering on mutiny, and did not want the bother of having me shot at dawn, that he relented so far as to say if I went, I went without his authority, and that the consequences of my foolhardiness would be on my own thick head. The O.C. was a man who knew his own mind and was not taking any unnecessary risks of getting into trouble for mislaying an Intelligence Officer. For all he knew it might be scheduled as Government property.

This was the prelude to the first of several personally conducted expeditions with Momo into enemy country. To this day I do not know whether Momo inspired them or whether my 'very strong juju' instigated him to plunge into them. In other words, I still do not know whether he was principal or agent. All I know is he—and his grin—bore me company through some pretty touch-and-go adventures.

Our first expedition, which was planned as little more than a reconnaissance to afford us an insight into the rules of the game as adapted to local conditions, was through dense bush to a point on the Cross River which by map reference should bring us out a little above the spot where our other outpost was, the one that had adventured too far afield and was hung up on the opposite bank of the river. With a very early start we reached our objective about 8 A.M. after an uneventful tramp. Working our way up the bank of the river, we came upon a fair number of footmarks, all of them left by bare feet except one impressed by a clumsy heavily nailed sole. Momo was confident, possibly from the disposition or grouping of the nails, that it recorded the regulation boot of a German native infantryman, with which he was, of course, familiar enough. The other tracks might have been left by barefoot natives or by other native soldiers conveying their boots, as is not uncommon, by some other method than on their feet. But of the identity of the wearer of the nailed boots Momo had no shadow of doubt.

The spoor was about twenty-four hours old. This meant that for the first time we were more or less in contact with the enemy in enemy country, and it invested our expedition with renewed interest. Continuing to work our way upstream with redoubled caution, we came upon a flotilla of seven native canoes of all sizes made fast to a tree on the opposite bank of a small but swift-flowing creek emptying itself into the river. The unusual spectacle gave me food for thought. Chance was unlikely to have moored seven of these craft at one and the same spot. They must therefore have been collected and made fast there for some purpose. If so, for what purpose? From the point of view of native mentality on its lawful peace-time occasions, my experience suggested no answer. But the times were not peaceful, and we had just had evidence that at least one German soldier had had business on this bank of the river. Supposing someone, not of native mentality, were interested in convoying a body of men, with as little delay as possible, from one bank of the creek, which with a fairly strong current was rather over thirty yards wide, to the other, the flotilla would be very convenient, so convenient that it occurred to me its removal might be to our interests.

Momo had apparently arrived at the same conclusion, though no doubt by a different process of reasoning. In any case it was he who suggested swimming the river and cutting the canoes adrift. As I dislike standing in the way of initiative, more especially when there may be crocodiles about, I acquiesced and undertook to cover his enterprise with my rifle. Divesting himself of his uniform, which could hardly have been made much wetter, and with his matchet slung round his neck by his belt, Momo, apparently untroubled by thoughts of crocodiles, took the water some distance up the creek to allow the current to help him to his objective. He was a powerful swimmer, and it did not take him long. A few slashes of his matchet and, to my infinite satisfaction, I saw the canoes drifting downstream. Later on I heard that two or three of them were salvaged by our people several miles down-river. Momo returned with his broad grin not in the least contracted by his swim. Casting round with revived energy, he came upon faint but fresh tracks, and, following them up, we discovered a newly cut narrow pathway through the dense bush. It was obviously quite a recent bit of work, though the heavy rains had obliterated any tracks about it. Following this without difficulty, we came upon another deep rapid creek. The country on the farther bank was fairly open, and I recognised it for some old yam farms, owned by the natives in the village near which we were in camp. The banks of the creek revealed further signs of activity. Two tall stout palm-trees had been felled so as to fall across the creek, and had no doubt, with a good deal of labour, been laid side by side. So they made quite a practicable bridge.

The pieces of the jig-saw puzzle that was worrying me were beginning to fall into place. Supposing enemy troops were ferried across the creek we had just left in canoes, assembled for the purpose, and assuming they were led along the prepared track we had just followed, they would obviously reach the rustic bridge, the practicability of which we were at that moment admiring. In that case they would be in a position to take our outpost in the flank; which would be distinctly embarrassing. We had never contemplated and had made no preparations for, say, a night attack—the first peep of dawn was a fashionable hour, I understood, for these enterprises—from this quarter. Most decidedly embarrassing! It was so very ingeniously planned, with such typically German thoroughness and efficiency, that I felt almost sorry now we had interfered with the German flotilla. Because, having had this peep at our opponent's hand, it would have been very attractive to lead them on from the palm-tree bridge which they must have crossed single file, into a neat little ambuscade awaiting them on the opposite bank. However, there is no retrieving the mistakes of Scapa Flow. The business in hand was to sever the tie-tie[1] attachment at the bridge-head, then to cross and do the like on the other bank until the trunks, half-submerged, swung free and drifted away down the river.

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[1] Strong flexible vines.

It had proved quite an interesting day after all, and we had done a useful bit of work. We were now, as I had expected, only about a mile away from camp. It was quite good going, as it would have been for the enemy if we had not been fortunate enough to obtain an inkling of his plans.

We reached camp in good time, and, though tired and soaked to the skin, in good spirits, because Intelligence had at length something definite, and of very real significance, to report. The O.C. and the military mind in general were actively interested in it. It was news to them that the enemy had been working on this bank of the river at all, and the potentialities of a surprise attack from this unexpected quarter impressed them. Intelligence stock went up, and Momo, as befitted the Leander of Crocodile Creek and the frustrator of German naval plans, bore himself with an air as well as with a grin. In the long run we did settle accounts with these trespassers on our privacy on this bank. They were a couple of German officers—or one, I believe, was very nearly an officer—and some forty native troops—but that was a good deal later on.

A few days after—it was still pouring, of course—Momo and I were returning to camp from an adjacent village where, since we now had conclusive evidence that they were on the move, we had vainly been endeavouring to glean some definite information of enemy movements. My main preoccupation at the moment was to get into something comparatively dry, but as we were crossing camp I did casually notice two stranger natives, fine-looking fellows I thought, naked except for scanty rather unclean loin-cloths, at the entrance to the O.C.'s hut. I did not pay any further attention to them because I took them to be runners with 'books' from the other outpost, such as were passing in and out of camp all day long, whom the O.C., through his interpreter, had probably been cross-questioning. As I say, I paid no particular attention because I was intent on getting under cover and shedding my sodden garments, and it was only their exceptionally fine physique that made me make a mental note of them. I had only just reached my hut and was beginning to change when I realised to my surprise that Momo had followed me, uninvited, into my quarters. He seemed to be in such a state of suppressed excitement, or so unnerved, as to be oblivious of this breach of decorum.

"German soldiers," he hissed in a stage whisper.

"Where?" said I.

"Those two black men outside the O.C.'s hut."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes! I know them. I

savez them proper when I be German soldier. What we go do, kill 'em ? "

Then I grasped what he was driving at. He was trying to make me understand that the men we had just seen were not the friendly natives I had assumed them to be but German native soldiers who had made their way into the camp in mufti, or at any rate very undress uniform, for the purpose of obtaining real, or disseminating false, information. If so, he was undoubtedly right in regarding them as dangerous, for they had shown both nerve and intelligence. I lost interest in my dripping garments and did some rapid thinking, because, if Momo were right, it was a case for action and quick action. These men were too dangerous to be allowed to get away. The problem was how to stop them and on what pretext.

If they had caught sight of Momo they would probably have recognised him at first glance as he had recognised them. In this case they would by this time have made themselves very scarce. Besides, I was by no means convinced that Momo's suspicions were well founded. The man was evidently badly rattled, and with only a passing glance—he could not have had more, because he was following close on my heels through camp—it seemed stretching the long arm of coincidence pretty far. But it suddenly struck me it might still be possible to put the matter to the test and to give Momo an opportunity of making sure of his identification. Grabbing my rifle and beckoning Momo to follow, I doubled out of camp without a word. It was a risk, but I had to take it. Fortunately from the position of my hut we were out of the visitors' range of vision, and they, if they were what Momo took them to be, would probably be having a look round camp for future reference.

We ran down the road—it was little more than a bush path—connecting the two outposts, because I felt sure that if the two strangers had entered the camp, as they obviously had done, without exciting suspicion, this was the only route they could have taken. About a quarter of a mile down this track I took a bush path turning off to the left which ran in the direction of the German boundary, and, as I knew, led into German territory farther on. But any visitor from that quarter would have to cross a broadish creek, and the tie-tie bridge across it had, so far as my information went, been destroyed. On reaching the creek I found to my surprise that the bridge, though cast loose from the banks, was still practicable, as Momo demonstrated, for one traveller at a time minding his step with care. This threw a new light on Momo's story, for had the spies come direct from enemy territory, this was the path they were bound to have taken, though I had regarded this back door as banged, barred and bolted. So, if they had effected their entrance by this route, it was safe to assume that they would return by it.

Momo, who had recovered his spirits and self-possession as soon as he had galvanised me into action, looked up at me with a grin as soon as the bridge proved to be practicable.

Feeling more assured we were on the right track, I studied the situation. Assuming that the strangers would return by this path, the bridge was the obvious place at which to invite them to answer a few leading questions. But there was very little cover on our side of the creek, whereas there was plenty on the other. I therefore very gingerly crossed the bridge to the farther bank and Momo followed in turn with equal caution. It was taking another risk, of course, but fortunately it never struck me until afterwards that we might be butting our heads into a hornet's nest. We had no evidence that our visitors, the stranger natives, had set out on their errand, whatever its purpose, unaccompanied, and the rest of the party might well be awaiting their return on the other bank. Fortunately they were not, so we took up a position, affording a good view of the bridge at a distance of some twenty yards under good cover, unmolested. There was now nothing to be done except to squat down and await events with what patience we could muster. By way of a change I felt almost grateful to the rain which was coming down harder than ever, because it would obliterate any tracks we might have left behind. We waited for fully half an hour in undisturbed, if uncomfortable, seclusion, and I was beginning to think Momo must have been mistaken and that our whole stalk had been a wild-goose chase. It was bitterly cold, my teeth were chattering, and my numbed hands looked as if they had spent the day in a laundry tub. But I decided to stick it a little longer before giving the whole thing up as, literally, a wash-out. And it was perhaps as well I did, for I was just about to throw in my hand and to break cover when Momo nudged me and by urgent signs gave me to understand that someone or something was afoot. I could hear nothing, but I knew that Momo's sense of hearing was, even for a native, extraordinarily acute, and after a while I, too, heard sounds of movement on the other bank in the direction of the path along which we had come. A minute later the stranger natives came into full view, and Momo's most expansive grin gave them welcome. They advanced unhesitatingly with a carefree air like men well pleased with themselves and their day's work. As they were crossing the treacherous bridge singly, one made some remark—it may have been an allusion to the fact that the structure was officially closed to traffic—to the other and both laughed aloud. Their careless confidence gave me pause. I had no definite evidence that the men were spies. The most I should be within my rights in doing would be to pull them up and cross-question them, thus giving Momo an opportunity of identifying them if he could, and if their answers were not to my liking, place them under arrest, a course of procedure they might be disposed to resent. The most reassuring feature of the situation perhaps was that the magazines of our rifles were fully charged, with a cartridge in the breech and the safety catch down.

They were considerate enough, however, to set my doubts at rest forthwith. After crossing the bridge they dived into the bush to the right of the path and soon reappeared, both carrying a German uniform, a cap, a belt, a pair of boots—and their rifles. So Momo had made no mistake. At the sight of them he cocked an eye at me that inquired more eloquently even than his grin, "Well, what about it now?"

Then, taking their seat with cool effrontery on a log close to the bridge, they divested themselves of their loin-cloths, donned their uniforms, slung their boots over their shoulders, and picked up their rifles. I hoped devoutly for everyone's sake that the latter were not, improbable as it was, loaded. As fully accoutred German privates, they came swinging at an unhurried pace along the track towards us, fine upstanding figures of men. At a distance of some ten paces we leapt into the middle of the path with our rifles to our shoulders.

"Halt! Wer da?" I challenged.

Their gasp of amazement as they found themselves staring into the muzzles of our rifles was almost comic. But, give them their due, they were stout fellows, those two black soldiers of the Kaiser. There was no hands-up or whine of Kamerad about them. They never shaped like standing or throwing their rifles down. Their only answer was a movement to raise their rifles. They gave us no alternative. Their rifles were, as I expected and verified afterwards, fully charged but the safety catches were up. That was about all there was in it. We collected the two rifles, the cartridge-belts and the two pairs of boots, as 'exhibits.'

Momo spoke their epitaph over the creek. "Good soldiers. Dam rotten spies." That about summed it up. They ought never to have been allowed to risk it. But the All-highest War Lord lost two brave soldiers that day, and I take off my hat to them. Momo had at first glance identified them as two privates serving in the same company as himself when he was in German service, and the markings on their kit bore him out.

We recrossed the bridge very cautiously, encumbered as we were with fresh impedimenta, and took the necessary steps to ensure that its wreckage should afford no crossing for friend or foe for some time to come.

There was some small stir in camp when we arrived back, complete with 'exhibits.' The O.C. had been worried to account for our long absence. His two visitors of the afternoon had been stranger natives who represented themselves as friendlies with valuable information about the enemy to impart. So in my absence he had, with his interpreter, interviewed them. They had imparted plenty of information, too, but it was deemed subsequently inexpedient to act on it. More important from my point of view was the fact that the even more valuable information the friendlies had gleaned in exchange would never reach my Opposite Number on the other side of the border. I have often wondered what he made of the fate of his two, probably volunteer, emissaries who never returned to report. I think, in fact I am sure, he never knew. They are probably still posted as missing. Those African creeks have their own methods for safeguarding secrets entrusted to them.

Elated, possibly, by the success of our recent expeditions, or puffed up by the restored prestige of Intelligence, I began to elaborate a plan for a more effective dissipation of the fog that veiled the enemy's designs. I had this much excuse when accused of 'stunts' for sheer love of the game, that it was idle to sit in my hut and wait for natives who were not in the least interested in, nor had the remotest conception of the importance of, the issues at stake to bring me trustworthy information. These sedentary methods may yield most satisfactory results on more sophisticated fronts, but if you want news in the back areas of Nigeria you have got to go and get it. All my experience, so far, had tended to convince me of the effectiveness of the 'look-see' method. At the same time I entertained no illusions of the risks it entailed, or of what I had to expect in the ordinary course of business if the enemy caught me at it. But I was worried about Momo, and whether I was justified in involving him in this enterprise, because they probably (I did not know, because I had carefully abstained from inquiring) would have a double account open against him.

So after some consideration I succinctly and unofficially outlined the plan of operations to him. He nodded and grinned, beaming approval.

"Master has very strong juju," he remarked.

"Yes, that's all very well. I am not denying that my juju has pulled us through so far. But it may let us down any day. You can never tell with jujus if you overstrain them. If it does, you are for it, and neither I nor my very strong juju can do anything to help you. I want you to be quite clear on that point."

He considered the proposition in all its bearings for a while in silence. Then he cocked an eye at me and said, "I savez, your juju be strong too much. I no fear."

After that I gave up debate and got on with the war. We packed our swags Australian fashion, which means that we wrapped our packs in half a blanket under a strip of American cloth to keep them as damp proof as possible. This with a supply of slices of roasted yam and my emergency haversack aforementioned, together with our rifles and ammunition (and a small flask of whisky in case of emergency), completed our equipment. I did not propose to leave more than I could help to my juju.

My scheme was to work our way to within view of the German concentration camp, which we knew to be on the opposite bank of the river, to ascertain which way the wind was setting there, and to form a rough estimate of the enemy's strength and armament. We should then know once and for all what we were up against; so far it had all been guesswork. It involved, I was aware, penetrating some considerable distance into enemy territory, and I had no notion of what surprises might be in store for us *en route*, because enemy patrols were pretty sure to be out on our bank of the river. As it was within a few days of full moon, it would, barring heavy rain clouds, be fairly light for most of the night, so I proposed to march by night and lie up by day. Momo claimed to know the country and the bush paths, and to be able to strike the main road leading to the German station where, I had every reason to believe, the enemy troops were concentrating. It was, I agree, an ambitious scheme, but pretty carefully thought out, by no means the leap in the dark for which the O.C. was at first sight inclined to discountenance it.

We set out in good time one afternoon, as I knew we were running no risk for the first few miles, and reached the border just before dark. I recognised one of the numbered iron boundary posts I remembered helping to set up only about a couple of years previously when attached to the Anglo-German Boundary Commission. We had a halt for about an hour under the flanges of a huge cotton-tree and a frugal meal of roasted yam. The pouring rain reminded me of my small flask of whisky, but conscience chipped in just in time to warn me that it ought to be reserved for emergencies. We then struck a narrow path leading in the direction we wanted to explore, but it was not easy travelling. This part of the country is very sparsely populated, with few landmarks and hardly any palm-trees, only occasional more or less deserted plantations. We had, too, to cross a good many small streams and creeks, all of them in spate, of course, flowing into the Cross River. We struggled on doggedly until about midnight, when we came upon a native village that suggested the possibilities of shelter. Momo went off to reconnoitre its outskirts and rejoined me to report that he had made his way back straight through it, and that it appeared to be completely evacuated. His explanation was, for there were signs of quite recent occupation, that the Germans had probably called up its inhabitants for forced labour and that the whole community had taken to the bush. In any case the place was much too close to the high contesting parties to be a health resort.

As it was raining harder than ever and the light was none too good for marching, I decided to accept the hospitality of one of the houses for a few hours' sleep, especially as things seemed safe enough to risk a fire. Choosing the least filthy one—and that did not set too high a standard—we swept the floor as clean as might be, shut the door on the outside world, and soon had a fire going and our dripping garments steaming round it. There were some raised 'mud sofas' against the walls of the room and they suggested repose. Wrapped in my half-blanket, which had not resisted the all-pervading dampness to the extent I could have wished, I was soon asleep, though, to judge by the sounds coming from his direction, Momo had been even quicker off the mark. We both overslept. I was literally called at cock-crow when an old rooster heralded the dawn. The patriarch must have declined to be expatriated, and Momo with deftness and dispatch took the necessary steps to have him roasting over the embers in time for breakfast. He must have lived a very ascetic life, but he made a welcome concomitant to the inevitable roasted yam, and what remained of him accompanied us on our journey.

I had had half a mind to spend the day here and not to set out until after dark, but grudged the waste of time, and Momo was insistent that we could not be far from the main track from the German station to another about thirty miles inland.

Refreshed by sleep and comparatively dry clothing we travelled apace. I let Momo have the lead because his sense of hearing and his eyesight were quicker than mine, and he was expecting to pick up his bearings at any moment. After about an hour, sure enough, we struck a wide well-worn bush road, which Momo at once recognised as his objective, and thought we could not be more than a couple of miles from the river and the German station on its opposite bank. Keeping well to the side of the road so as to leave no tracks, we pushed on for a short distance until Momo came to the conclusion that the open road was no place for the likes of us. There was always the risk of stumbling upon a patrol, and runners between the stations were sure to be pretty frequent. So we turned off along a small stream, and to avoid having to cross it, made for thick bush, about thirty yards away, where we ensconced ourselves behind a huge cotton-tree.

We were well out of sight from the road, but we ourselves could keep two or three stretches of it under observation. Here we lay low, expecting to have to wait for dark before pushing on. I calculated that we were anything between twelve and fourteen miles from our camp, but Momo reassured me by remembering there was, provided we could reach it, a short-cut by a path running parallel to the river. We had not been in our retreat long before we heard light running footfalls on the road, and, from our O.P., saw a native, naked except for the customary loin-cloth, speeding towards the river and carrying a short stick with a strip of cloth wrapped round it. This identified him for a runner with a letter for the station. I would have given a good deal for a sight of its contents, not that they would have been much use to me at the moment, because German is not one of my languages. Nor, oddly enough, was it of Momo's. In the German Cameroons military words of command were never given in German, for the simple reason that they would have been unintelligible to the troops. To give their orders effectively European officers and N.C.O.'s had to undergo a course of pidgin-English. So I allowed the runner to pass unmolested. He was breathing pretty hard and must have covered a longish distance. He was an indication that there were Germans in the offing, and perhaps at no great distance. There was nothing for it except to go on lying low, exasperating as it was to be so near and yet so far. All I wanted now was to reach the river bank which I knew commanded a full view of the cantonments and parade ground of the station opposite, and it would not take me long to tell whether they showed indications of a certain liveliness. I felt so confident about it because I knew the station, where a few years previously I had enjoyed the hospitality of the German Commissioner for a few days. But on that occasion I had approached it in state by the river, without any necessity for beating about the bush. The delay became positively irritating under the onslaught of every kind of insect pest, with strong pro-German sympathies; mosquitoes, sandflies, tsetse flies and a particularly malignant brand of biting ant attacked us with venomous determination. The prospect of a night under this victimisation did not appeal to me.

To kill time, we had another repast of roasted yam, at what I judged to be noon, when the remains of the rooster made their last appearance on any stage. We had hardly finished this meal when there came the sound of voices and the chink of accoutrements. The voices were talking German. From my O.P. I saw a handful of German officers, preceded by a few native soldiers, followed by more soldiers and carriers with their loads. After a short consultation I heard, to my consternation, the command "Halt" given and repeated all along the line. Then a babel of many tongues arose, and the carriers began to lift their loads down. There could be no doubt about it. The column was falling out for a mid-day meal before moving on to the station.

We were caught in about the prettiest predicament that could well have been devised. At any moment a prowling soldier or a casual carrier might stumble upon us. Our numbers then would indubitably be up. I had visions of myself with my back against a tree, staring down a row of German rifle barrels, unpleasantly close. And Momo, poor old Momo, his fate would in all probability be even less inviting than mine. I glanced at him almost guiltily and he contrived to grin back, though in rather a subdued fashion. But to do him justice he was not, or did not appear to be, nearly so scared by this astounding freak of bad fortune as I was. He always had more implicit confidence in my juju than I. It was, at any rate, all we had to fall back on now. It was useless to think of crawling deeper into the bush. At that distance we should almost infallibly have been seen or heard. The only thing for it was to stick as closely as possible to the cover of our protecting cotton-tree without sound or motion, and to trust to my 'juju' to live up to his reputation.

And I must admit that on this occasion he justified the confidence reposed in him. For one thing he must have made the German officers feel absolutely confident and at their ease. For they did not, as I half-expected they might, throw out pickets. Had they done so it would probably have been our undoing. Instead, they had their camp tables and chairs put up in the open roadway and enjoyed a leisurely luncheon amid a great deal of gossip and laughter. The troops and the carriers, too, had a meal of some sort, but also kept to the road, until one of the carriers took it into his head to take a stroll heading straight in our direction and sent my heart into my mouth again.

A German N.C.O. shouted a peremptory order to come back at once. The explanation would be that the N.C.O. had had dealings with bolting carriers before and did not intend this man to have too long a start. I have never admired the Teutonic instinct for discipline and order more whole-heartedly.

But even the most efficient 'juju' could not prevent that luncheon interval from being a thoroughly bad quarter of an hour, unduly protracted. Metaphorically and literally I was suffering from an acute attack of cold feet. Then I was overcome by a sickly apprehension lest I, or possibly Momo, might be seized by a fit of sneezing. This in turn brought on one of those maddening 'tickles' in the throat, when the suppression of a craving to cough or to clear the throat becomes a positive physical torture. The pro-Hun insect pests improved the occasion by attacking us with renewed malignity. Their Intelligence Service had, no doubt, advised them that for some reason or other we were defenceless and temporarily out of action. So they came in their hundreds, camped out on us, and wreaked their wicked will upon us unchecked. They helped to make that German luncheon party seem interminable.

At length—and not, I suppose, in terms of time after an unduly protracted interval—the order to fall in was given. It involved, of course, a certain amount of bustle and confusion, the packing away of chairs and tables, the dragging about of chop boxes, and the general stir preparatory to the departure of a large body of men. It gave me the opportunity for which I had been waiting with smarting impatience. Motioning to Momo to keep absolutely still, I risked a peep through my spy-hole and had my first real view of the scene. First came six native soldiers with fixed bayonets, preceding another with his rifle slung and bearing a full-sized German flag, then a group of four European officers, whom I took to be the O.C. of the column and his staff, at the head of a strong body of troops with three machine-guns and endless boxes of ammunition. There followed an interminable procession of troops and carriers, bent double under their loads, and four more European officers brought up the rear. The column, flowing slowly past in single file, looked quite a formidable force. In terms of actual numbers I made its strength to be eight European officers and N.C.O.'s, eighty-five native troops, fully armed and equipped, three machine-guns with their teams, and a big contingent of carriers, servants and other details. I was glad enough to see the last of them. At any rate, it left me free to engage in savage reprisals against the gorged pro-Hun insects.

After allowing the column a quarter of an hour's start, I was all in favour of following promptly in its wake. But Momo would have none of it. We had, he explained, to wait until the rearguard had passed through. It was the German custom on march to have a fairly strong rearguard about a mile behind the main body. What the reason for this was he could not say, but having marched with them he knew their little ways. Even as we were debating the point acrimoniously but in whispers, came the tramp of marching feet and the sound of voices. A German N.C.O. and fifteen natives swung by at a brisk pace. They brought the total strength of the detachment up to nine European officers and one hundred native other ranks—a sufficiently big force in itself to wipe our handful off the face of the earth.

We gave them a quarter of an hour's start, when Momo said he was prepared to chance it if we kept our eyes skinned for runners. I suggested that we might be running into the carriers returning after delivering their loads, but Momo made light of it. The Germans, he thought, would not let any labour slip through their fingers. So we moved on. Momo kept about twenty yards ahead of me, so that when I saw him dive into the bush I could immediately follow suit. I had a creepy feeling all down my spine that I was being stalked from behind, but that could not be helped, and I knew that Momo would give me plenty of warning of any danger from the road. We pushed on very cautiously, but had the river in view long before I was expecting it. There must have been some good staff work in the transport department, for from our cover above the bank we could watch the last canoe-load of troops and carriers putting across.

There was not apparently another human being on our bank of the river, and this suited my purpose excellently well. We celebrated the occasion by another banquet of yam, and I plead guilty to a pull at my flask because the close call of the luncheon interval had rather shaken my nerve. It was now only about three o'clock; I began to have hopes, with luck, if Momo succeeded in striking his short-cut, of making camp some time that night. Luck would have to include finding no unbridged big creeks across our path. The term bridges in this part of the world, by the way, only connotes trunks felled across the stream from bank to bank for the purpose, or the bush swinging-bridge, a network contraption of 'tie-tie' stretched like a spider's web from tree to tree across the creek.

From a mound overgrown with long grass I found a first-rate bird's-eye view of the whole station, cantonments, parade ground and outbuildings. Earlier in the day I had cursed myself for a fool for encumbering myself with the additional weight of my field-glasses, but it was most convenient to have them to hand just now. Lying asprawl, pressed close against the mound, I felt quite safe from observation from the opposite bank, for the river, in full spate now, was, I estimated, 200 yards from bank to bank, though during the dry season it is fordable at this spot. I could not make out any launches against the little river-side landing-stage, but the large number of big native canoes accounted for the rapid transport of the column. The station itself was like a disturbed ant-heap, with swarms of natives running about in response to stentorian orders.

Seeing me so absorbed in the scene, Momo could contain his curiosity no longer, crawled on to the mound beside me, and with an ingratiating grin, indicated that he, too, would like to have a 'look-see.' So I handed him the glasses, and he, of course, put them up the wrong way round and saw nothing. After I had adjusted them for him, and he had found the right focus, he betrayed intense interest by making little clicking noises in his throat and snapping his fingers. But his only comment was, "Ki! plenty, plenty man."

There was no gainsaying that, so I relieved him of the glasses because I wanted to get on with my notes. Presently bugles sounded, and the ant-heap became more animated than ever. Then I realised that I had chanced upon a full-dress occasion.

There was evidently a review of all arms in progress. The troops fell in, the machine-guns were disposed in neat alignment, the officers took up their stations in front of their respective units. A little group of officers whom I took to be the O.C. and his staff appeared from one of the main buildings. The O.C. inspected each several unit, and then addressed them collectively in quite a long speech, unfortunately lost on me, which culminated in a loud outburst of "Hoch, hoch!" The whole show was most considerately arranged for the purpose of my notes. No Intelligence Officer could have looked for handsomer treatment. I almost repented the harsh feelings I had entertained against them, under the cotton-tree, during the luncheon interval. I made the total roll of European officers and N.C.O.'s to amount to eighty, which seemed disproportionately high, until I remembered that they were not necessarily all regulars, but probably included reserve and militia men, traders and their assistants with, no doubt, a stray missionary or two, but trained men for all that, because most of them must have done their service with the colours before they came to Africa.

I counted the native troops *en bloc*, and made their score to be somewhere between 420 and 450. There was no making mistakes about the machine-guns; there were eight of the neat little fellows admirably defined, each with its crew beside it and a European in charge.

When the troops were dismissed as the bugles sounded 'dinners,' I unobtrusively fell out too. There was not much more to be learnt by staying on and I was anxious to get back to camp with my information as quickly as might be, because, from the look of things, the enemy meant business in the very near future. We slipped off the mound to leg it for the spot where Momo said he was going to find the short-cut to take us straight back to camp, or very near it. Though I had with good reason every confidence in him, I could only hope he was right. It was now all a question of turning the information we had gleaned to account in good time.

Just as we were on the point of starting Momo laid his hand on my arm and without a word pointed to the figure of a native boy or very young man paddling a solitary canoe across the river. He was quite near our bank, so we watched him land and make his canoe fast, wondering what his business was. He was armed only with a stick, and, climbing the bank, made for a small patch of growing yams about sixty yards from the river. Here he began digging up yams with his stick, utterly unaware that anyone was interested in his movements.

Without with your leave or by your leave Momo slipped away. A minute or two later I saw the empty canoe drifting fast down-stream.

When he rejoined me I whispered to him that the native would be a useful prisoner, because he might prove a depository of information invaluable to Intelligence. Momo responded with a grin that boded our prospective prisoner no good. We stalked him without difficulty, for he was intent on his digging, to within quite easy distance. Then Momo gave me his rifle to hold. He made a great approach, as stealthy as a cat on a pigeon. Within a couple of yards of his victim he pounced. By the time I got up he was sitting on his captive, hissing the most blood-curdling threats if he should dare utter a sound. The poor little wretch was far too terrified to think of making a noise of any kind. He was reduced to a limp mass of terror. Between us we had him on his feet in no time and raced him into the thick bush, where we had a closer look at our captive. He was still half-distraught with fear, and, believing his last hour had come, had this much excuse that Momo instead of grinning was glaring at him like a fiend incarnate, hissing more searing maledictions than a London taxi-driver bilked of his fare. The poor little beggar's knees fairly gave way under him and he clung round my ankles whimpering for mercy. I reassured him that we meant him no harm, that it was only

Momo's playful little way, and that all we wanted out of him was a little information. Then I suggested he might safely get up and listen to what I had to say and I would guarantee Momo as gentle as a lapdog. Thus encouraged he got up, and recognition on either side was instantaneous. I had known him as the body servant of the German District Officer whose guest I had been whenever I had occasion to visit German territory, and who had returned the compliment by spending several days at my station. I remembered him well as an obliging boy and an efficient servant who spoke English well. That is, I suppose, why he had come into frequent personal contact with me. He beamed with relief and delight on recognising me. Momo, after this happy encounter, replaced his glares by grins. It was undoubtedly a very odd coincidence, and I expect Momo thought that my juju was at the bottom of it, and so perhaps it was.

I told the boy he would have to accompany us for reasons of high politics, as I could not allow him to return to German service for the time being. He made no bones about that, in fact seemed rather relieved, and said he had no wish to, provided I would look after him and protect him. At the word he looked askance at Momo, who was endeavouring to wear his most benevolent expression of cheerful guilelessness. I reassured him on these points and had no further trouble with him. Jerry—I cannot for the life of me remember his name, so we may as well call him Jerry for short—accepted his hard fate as prisoner of war with almost an air of complacency. He told me later on that on the declaration of war the German military authorities had, as was the endearing way they had everywhere, treated even their own European civilian officials in a very high-handed fashion. They had turned his master, the District Commissioner, out of his house at a minute's notice, commandeered all his furniture and belongings, and sent him into the bush with orders to collect huge supplies of native foodstuffs. Jerry himself, who seemed to have been attached to his civilian master, was transferred, without the formality of consulting his wishes, to the service of a German officer who bullied but otherwise failed to look after him, and it was while he was collecting a few yams to allay the pangs of hunger that he had fallen into our hands.

Momo was not long, greatly to my relief, in finding the path he had had in his mind's eye. He took the lead, then came Jerry; I brought up the rear. The going was good. Momo set a swinging pace, and before sunset we had left the German station a good six miles behind us. To complete our good fortune, the rain had left off for a breather; the moon, not far short of full, made travelling comparatively easy. Barring unforeseen obstructions—as there nearly always are when travelling in the remoter parts of Africa—I hoped to be in camp round about nine o'clock. I was yearning for a heart-to-heart talk with Jerry, because I felt sure that he could fill in a good many of the gaps which, I was aware, there were in my own information, but deemed it wiser to abstain until no outside distractions were likely to interrupt us. As luck would have it we had only two really bad creeks to cross by the always rather treacherous means of tie-tie bridges, rather the worse for wear, which swayed and creaked and sighed—though we treated them with the greatest respect and only attempted them one by one—and took some time to negotiate. When I was crossing the second one, in fact, I was expecting at every step to be dropped into the raging swirling torrent beneath. It just did not let me down, but it shook my nerve, and I doubt whether under normal conditions I should have risked it. Once safely on the other bank I again plead guilty to applying to my flask for a reinforcement of Dutch courage, because my native stock had completely given out. In accordance with the soundest principles of strategical theory we destroyed all the bridges in our rear.

When, as near as I could make it about nine o'clock, we were within easy distance of the camp, I sent Momo on ahead, out of consideration for Jerry's nerves, to take the edge off the first alertness of the guard. This precaution may have accounted for my state reception by the O.C. and other military dignitaries agog to hear my story, of which, I gathered, Momo had given them a foretaste that lacked nothing in picturesqueness. I was much too relieved to be, so to speak, home again to gratify their curiosity; not a word could they get out of me until a really hot bath with a long strong tonic from 'medical comforts' and a square meal had convinced me of the reality of my safe return to comparative civilisation, and I saw to it that Momo and Jerry, in accordance with their needs, had similar recuperative treatment.

I then felt sufficiently restored to give the O.C. a summary of my experiences and of the information I had gleaned literally by the sweat of my brow. He was so insistent that "something had to be done about it" that we drafted short reports that same evening, setting forth the main points of the new information to hand, and despatched them forthwith by runners to the O.C.'s of the outposts likely to be most interested in the new light on the situation, and to the officer in command of our base camp.

After this return to my official duties as Intelligence

Officer (I always did find office work fatiguing), I was so dog-tired that I simply tumbled into my cosily moist bed and mercifully forgot all about everything.

As soon as dawn woke me on the following morning, I sent for Jerry, and a pretty bedraggled object he looked, though except that I had had a bath and a shave I daresay I was not much more presentable. I found him quite prepared to be communicative and a very valuable check on, and supplement to, the information I had brought in myself. He confirmed as nearly as not to matter my return of the strength of the enemy's force, officers, other ranks and machine-guns. The column that had given me such a bad quarter of an hour (and more) under the cotton-tree had come in from the north, and the main body of the garrison at his station had only been awaiting its advent before launching a full-dress attack on our people who had dug themselves into the German station where they were quite definitely held up. They proposed to wipe them out. There was, I gathered, a good deal of the 'Deutschland über Alles' and 'Gott strafe England' spirit in the tone prevailing. One particularly valuable item of information Jerry gave in a casual parenthesis. He had heard his master say that the attack was timed for the next full moon, and at night.

This bit of news entailed the despatch of further reports, marked very urgent, to the several parties interested. I am glad to be able to record that they reached their addresses in good time to put them on their guard. For his own part our O.C. took all measures necessary to meet the new emergency, but what he could not of course do was, failing orders, to leave his post.

I resumed my examination of the prisoner Jerry, and after I had again assured him that he had nothing to fear, and that if necessary I would take him into employment under the umbrella of Intelligence for the duration, he became confidential, and I received more 'news' of acutely personal interest.

"Master," said Jerry impressively, almost prayerfully, "don't let those German men catch you."

"I don't propose to. But why?"

"Because they savez you walk about plenty and find out what thing they do, and they promise to give any native men who catch you twenty pounds English (at that date and in those parts British silver money was worth double that of German currency). When black men catch you they are to bring you to the Germans alive; if you no walk, they are to break your legs and drag you in."

I made a mental note that they (either German or native) would never take me alive, as, indeed, I had done when we set out on our little expedition to inspect the German station. I wonder if my Opposite Number, who was a civilised and presumably an educated man, was a party to these instructions.

At this juncture Momo, who, except for his grin, looked a little washed-out but spruce and alert in his uniform, came in to report for duty. I told him of the fate in store for me if we had been caught under that cotton-tree. His comment was terse and to the point—

"Germans no catch we, sar. Your juju strong too much."

But he looked as if he held the unfortunate Jerry personally responsible for the savagery of these instructions; which was altogether unfair on Jerry.

The attack in force duly developed according to plan on due date. But it is not my purpose to write an account of operations, interesting as they were, on the Nigerian frontier of the Cameroons. They were after all only a side-show. But I have often wondered what would have been the upshot of it (I mean as regards the side-show) if Momo had failed to identify the two stranger natives in our camp in the nick of time, or had missed the short-cut home from the German station: if in short his loyalty, resourcefulness and confidence in my juju, had not been as unswerving as they proved to be.

Summing things up, I saw no reason why Momo should not have earned a bit of ribbon on his tunic to tickle his vanity, as well as most people. I put it up to the O.C. and he reacted handsomely.

So far as I know Momo, like no doubt innumerable others who have deserved no less well of their country, continues to go about his duties, loyal, courageous, efficient—and undecorated except for the usual service medals. And I feel sure he goes about them with a grin.

STERN FIRST.

BY SHALIMAR.

I.

For nineteen days the large, iron, four-masted barque in which I was serving had been beating backwards and forwards, mostly under short canvas, across that abomination of desolation the stormy tract of water which lies between Tierra del Fuego and the fringe of the Antarctic ice, trying to weather Cape Horn outward bound in the teeth of the great west wind, the driving squalls of sleet and snow, and the towering rushing seas which surged continuously at her, exerting their terrific powers to drive her back to leeward and hinder her every attempt to make westing. On the evening of the nineteenth day, in a north-west gale, she was head-reaching to the south-west on the starboard tack with three lower topsails, foresail and fore topmast staysail set—just as much canvas as she could stagger along under.

During the second dog-watch from six o'clock until eight, the starboard watch was on deck, and the four apprentices who were in it had been cowering miserably under the shelter of one of the boats on top of the after-house. This house, which was the half-deck and our home, stood on the main deck between the break of the poop and the mizzen-mast, and was connected with the poop by a flying bridge. The apprentices were Tommy, who was a first voyager; Larry, a second voyager; George, who was in his third year; and myself, who had nearly finished my apprenticeship. Presently Tommy, who was keeping time, struck eight bells on the poop. It was repeated on the large bell on the forecastle-head. The two watches mustered aft and the starboard watch was ordered below, much to our relief, for we could see that the vessel was straining rather heavily, and we had feared that the foresail would have to be taken in by all hands at the change of the watch. Our luck was in, however, and, watching our chance, for the seas were breaking continuously over the weather rail and sweeping the main deck, we eventually got the lee door of the half-deck open, and all got safely inside. What a cheerless den it looked! A lamp, with the glass badly smoked on one side, hung from a beam, jerking to and fro in a drunken manner at its lanyard. Over a foot of water swished about the floor, welling up on the lee side so that the lower bunks were almost awash.

The bread barge had been upset and spilt out the biscuits, which, sodden and pulpy, were washing about all over the place. Our sea-chests were lashed, but the lashings could not be got tight enough, so the chests slid backwards and forwards about six inches as the ship lurched violently to leeward and then back again. She was lying over at an angle that never got less than fifteen degrees from the perpendicular, and often reached thirty on the leeward roll.

Gloomily we proceeded to take off our oilskins and sea-boots, which was all the undressing we did down south there. In justice to ourselves, however, I must say that it usually took more than the ordinary vicissitudes of a Cape Horn passage to reduce us to this state of gloom. Only that morning, after an exhausting four hours on deck, we had gone below to a breakfast such as none of us would have placed before our dogs had we been at home, and yet the half-deck had rung with merry laughter. George, after suggesting that anyone who went to sea for a living when he could get a job ashore should have no difficulty whatever in qualifying for a lunatic asylum, and that he who went to sea for pleasure would go to hell for pastime, had rounded on Tommy and asserted that it was well known that that youth—who had only turned sixteen—had been sent to sea because his mamma had discovered him making amorous overtures to the children's governess; and Tommy's spluttered indignant denials and his girlish blushes had so convulsed us that our laughter was heard outside, and one of the watch on deck had risked the mate's displeasure and sneaked in to participate in the joke. Since then, however, something had happened. Jansen, a young Danish able-seaman, one of the smartest sailors in the ship, had gone overboard. All hands had been making fast the main upper topsail at eight bells in the afternoon watch, and Jansen, ignoring the old sailor's proverb of caution, "One hand for the owner and one for yourself," had let go the jackstay and was using both hands to haul the canvas on to the yard. The wind had suddenly torn the canvas from his grasp. Clutching wildly at nothing he had fallen backward, hit the main yard-arm—for that yard was as usual braced up a little sharper than the topsail yards—as he dropped, and had then fallen into the sea to leeward. With the exception of the mate, who was on top of the forward house, the captain, who was standing beside the man at the wheel, and Tommy, who was on the lee side of the poop, all hands were up on the yard. We knew, of course, that to lower a boat in that heavy sea was impossible, but all operations on the yard were suspended as we helplessly watched the yellow oilskin-clad figure floating aft. Tommy, with considerable presence of mind in a first voyager, whipped a coil of rope from a belaying pin and threw it at Jansen, but the latter must have been stunned by his contact with the main yard and made no effort. Before he had gone twenty yards astern he had sunk like a stone.

We eventually got the topsail made fast and descended to the deck to find Tommy crying hysterically. Poor little devil! Six months before he had been at school and had never witnessed a worse accident than a broken collar-bone at a Rugby match.

"If only there had been a boat-hook handy I might have had him," he wailed.

Jansen's death had profoundly impressed all hands—after all we were not a very large company—and at the moment they were probably as gloomy in the forecastle as we were in the half-deck. We crawled into our bunks and drew our sodden blankets over us. George, after wasting half a dozen matches, had got the damp tobacco in his pipe to draw, and was noisily sucking at it. In an endeavour to dispel the gloom I spoke.

"Cheer up, chaps," I said; "it won't always be like this. Once we get a slant, ten days will take us up amongst the flying-fish again."

"Yes," George chimed in cheerfully; "and look here, Tommy, old man, although you *are* such an unspeakable rip, the first night that we are in 'Frisco I'll take you up to Clark's in Kearny Street and give you the finest feed you ever had in your life."

"In the unlikely event of us ever getting to San Francisco," Larry began ponderously, "or indeed of ever getting anywhere beyond where we are now——"

"Oh, dry up, you lugubrious swine," George interrupted.

After that there was silence inside the half-deck, while outside the wind howled through the rigging and the great seas crashed on the deck and swirled around our little house. The weather seemed to me to be steadily getting worse.

"I hope that we get our watch below," I remarked doubtfully. "That foresail will have to come in sooner or later."

There was no reply. I looked around the wretched hovel, which was dimly lit by the rays of the turned-down lamp. In the bunk beneath mine Tommy, fast asleep, was breathing peacefully. In the bunk opposite George was snoring; his pipe had fallen from his lips and was lying on his breast, but I had no anxiety because of that, for the damp tobacco would cease to smoulder as soon as he stopped sucking at it. For a few minutes I lay awake thinking. How much longer would this battle with the hostile elements and this acute discomfort—the wind, the cold, the pain on deck, the sopping misery of wet clothes and blankets below—continue? And would Jansen be the only sacrifice we would make to the insatiable greed of the Horn, or would others of us forget to keep one hand for ourselves and one for the owner and go the same way? Then I also fell asleep.

II.

"Hey! *Hey!* HEY! you sleepers; show a leg; one bell."

I must have been asleep for nearly three and a half hours, but it only seemed like a minute since I closed my eyes when this ear-splitting yell echoed around the half-deck. In fine weather—in the Trades, for instance—we would take no notice of that first call further than turning over and going to sleep again; but off the Horn there was so much to do in the way of lashings round the wrists and ankles to keep the water from getting inside our oilskins, and "soul and body lashings" round our waists, that the quarter of an hour between one bell and eight bells was just sufficient, and we promptly sat up in our bunks. The small blue-lipped apprentice from the port watch —clad in streaming yellow oilskins—who had called us sat on one of the sea-chests and regarded us with cold disfavour.

"Oh, you pampered pets of the starboard watch," he said disgustedly.

"Hullo! what's the matter with *you?*" asked George, who had reached for his pipe—always his first action on being called.

"Matter!" he of the port watch replied bitterly. "It's all hands to take in the foresail at eight bells, and that's a good slice off our watch below gone."

"What's it like out there now?" I asked.

"Blowing like hell with squalls of sleet," was the reply. "That foresail is going to be a first-class frolic. The old man has hung on a bit too long this time."

He opened the lee door and vanished into the gloom. Silently we made our preparations, sitting up on the sea-chests so as to be clear of the swirling water, hauling on damp sea-boots and cold clammy oilskins, then fumbling with numb fingers at the rope-yarns with which we were lashing the latter. Eight bells struck, and with the last clang we cautiously opened the door and stepped out on to the main deck into the darkness and the shrieking gale. The second mate's voice came bellowing through the devilish screaming of the wind.

"Come on forward," he yelled. "All hands haul the foresail up."

Just as we got to the fore part of the half-deck a huge sea reared itself over the weather-rail, and with one accord we jumped for the mizzen fife-rail and held on. The scene along the main deck over which we had to make our way, viewed from the fife-rail, was one that might well have appalled the bravest amongst us. Although the vessel was lying over with her lee scuppers under water, the seas were pouring in a continuous cascade over the weather-rail; and as if that were not enough, she was scooping it in over the lee-rail as well. Evidently there were more ways of going overboard than falling from aloft. Our captain had made himself a reputation for weathering Cape Horn, and he went by two golden rules. One was to get well to the southward so as to be able to take advantage of the south-west wind when it came—as come it must—and the other was to keep the vessel moving; and we were carrying out both. He hated to heave his vessel to; it seemed to him to be a tame surrender this lying to, drifting dead to leeward and losing all the westing he had made. Far better, he declared, to keep head-reaching under all the canvas she could carry and try to do something. Now, however, the tumult which the elements had raised against him had dismayed even his stout heart, and he *had* to shorten sail. This time, undoubtedly, he had overdone it; as the port watch apprentice had said, he had hung on a bit too long, and for once in a way the half-deck's criticism of the cabin was correct.

The second mate, who was up on the fife-rail with us, concealed behind a voice like an Atlantic liner's fog-horn and a villainous squint in his eyes one of the kindliest natures I have ever known. Suddenly he turned to Tommy, who was hanging on beside him, and roared—

"What the hell are *you* doing here? Get up on the poop—this is no place for you. Come on the rest of you."

He leapt from the fife-rail, splashed through the water to the main hatch, and we followed. Aided by the life-lines which were stretched along the deck fore and aft, we at last got forward to where all hands were gathered. It was impossible to distinguish them in the inky darkness, one could only tell them by the sound of their voices, and there were consequently many opportunities for skulking; in fact, we found out later that one of the able-seamen, a Dago, had taken no part in the proceedings at all, but had been lurking under the forecastle-head the whole time. Most of the men were cowed and dispirited by the hardships which we were enduring, but amongst them were some whom nothing could depress or dismay. At that time—about the end of last century—British ships were carrying many more foreigners in their forecastles than Britishers. The more respectable British seamen were finding plenty of employment in the great liners, and even in tramp steamers they were better paid and better fed than they were in windjammers, although there was a race of sailormen—alas! even then rapidly dying out—who would never go into steam. Unfortunately, they were generally the scum of the ports; hard-bitten, turbulent and prone to getting drunk whenever they got the opportunity. In consequence shipmasters much preferred the milder and more docile foreigners—mostly Dutchmen and Dagos—although most ships carried a few Britishers for just such occasions as this. We had three of them in the forecastle—Liverpool Irishmen—and excellent seamen they were; but a more truculent, reckless and foul-mouthed trio of hard cases and jail-birds never sailed the ocean. They had terrorised everyone else in the forecastle, they were difficult to discipline and they were generally detested, but there was not a man on board the ship from the captain downward who was not glad of their presence that night. It was said of them that they feared not God nor man—off the Horn we were to discover that they feared not the elements either. I do not remember their real names, but they were generally known as Dublin, Belfast and Liverpool—the first two, probably, because they originally came from those ports, the latter because of his domicile. When we arrived forward we found that two of them were up on the gale-swept forecastle-head helping the Cockney boatswain to unhook the chain fore-tack, while the other was standing by in the seething lee scuppers ready to help the second mate to slack away the fore-sheet—about as dangerous and unpleasant a job as one could imagine.

The mate superintended the operations from the top of the forward house, and it was fortunate that he also possessed a voice like a fog-horn, for the cumulative effects of the various noises—the howling of the gale in the rigging, the thundering of the seas, the twanging of backstays and the clanging of freeing ports—was deafening.

"All ready?" he roared. "Slack away the sheet handsomely, mister. Haul away the lee clew garnet and the buntlines. Lively now."

The second mate and Belfast surged the sheet round the iron bitts, but the great sail, beginning to feel its freedom, defied for a time our every effort to haul it up. A number of the men seemed to be slacking, and only one of them—a Norwegian—could manage to sing out a mournful—

"Oh, ho! up mit her."

Suddenly a great wave towered to windward as high as the shear-poles. The mate saw it coming, and yelled to us to hang on for our lives. We managed to get the buntlines and clew garnets belayed, and sprang to the fife-rail and top of the house for safety; but how the second mate and Belfast managed to get the sheet secured round the bitts again and to avoid being drowned down there to leeward I never knew. We commenced hauling again, often up to our waists in the ice-cold water and barely able to keep our feet on the greasy rolling deck; but it was not until we were reinforced by the boatswain and the three Irishmen that we got the wind-filled monster into some sort of control. Eventually we had done all we could do from the deck; buntlines and leech-lines were as close up as we could get them, but still the great sail above us was full of bags of wind and slatting and thrashing with claps like thunder.

"Aloft and furl it," the mate roared.

"*Haloft and furl it.*" Dublin, repeating the order with a prideful shout, was the first man to spring into the weather rigging. We followed and, jambed hard against the shrouds by the weight of the wind, we slowly struggled up the ratlines. On deck we had been drenched by breaking seas and spray, now we were scourged by flying hailstones. Eventually we reached the yard and laid out on it, and the real fight with the foresail began. The canvas was wet and heavy and ballooning out as stiff as a board; the ship was lurching heavily, so that the buckling steel yard was swaying giddily in wide circles through the air. Our only foothold was the wire foot-rope which was stretched below the yard and which swayed to and fro as we worked, and the only grip for our half-frozen fingers was the iron jackstay which ran along the top of the yard and to which the sail was bent. In at the bunt, where the work was heaviest, along with the second mate and the boatswain, were the three Irishmen, struggling like demons. They called the sail by an unprintable name as they fought with it, they blasphemed as long as they had breath, but inch by inch they gathered up the stubborn folds. Once we almost had it mastered; the weather leech had been passed along the yard, and some of the men were lying on it to keep it down. One or two of us sat down on the wire foot-ropes, hanging on with one hand to the stirrups, and ready with the other to pass the gaskets which were to fasten the sail to the yard. Then a furious gust caught an open lug; some of the weaklings to windward let the leech go and the sail blew out free again, thrashing high above the heads of the men on the yard, who could do nothing but cling desperately to the jackstay, and nearly jerking those of us who were sitting on the foot-rope into eternity. Above me a Dutchman was sobbing with pain; the canvas had torn off two of his fingernails. We had to watch our chance, wait for a lull and start all over again. After another struggle we got the sail gathered up, and this time we managed to frap it to the yard with the gaskets. It was by no means a neat job—nothing like a harbour stow—but it was secure. We laid down from aloft, and as we reached the deck someone struck three bells — half-past one. The port watch was ordered below.

It was my wheel at two o'clock. I felt hungry, and remembering the state of our bread barge, I determined to go to the port forecastle, seeing that I was in the vicinity of it when I descended from the fore-yard, and borrow a couple of biscuits. Rather shyly, for I had never been in the forecastle at sea when it was occupied, I opened the door. The first thing that struck me was that the men were far more comfortable when below than we were; there was no water swishing about their floor, and they had a lighted bogey stove, round which there hung a number of weird-looking garments. Some of the men of the watch below were already in their bunks, others were sitting on their sea-chests. The atmosphere was thick; all but one of the men were smoking, and the stove was smoking too. Near the door with one hand to his face, which was streaming with blood, cowered one of the Dagos. As I entered he addressed me.

"He puncha me on da nose. He puncha me on da nose," he whimpered, indicating Liverpool with his other hand.

Liverpool took two steps forward in the jaunty manner peculiar to various hooligans and Apaches and stuck out his lower jaw.

"If ye don't git to hell out o' this, ye white-livered spawn of an ice-cream barrow," he snarled, "I'll kicka yer ribs in as well."

"Where me go?" wailed the unfortunate Dago. "Me no posseebly stoppa da deck."

"Go!" replied Liverpool with a bitter sneer. "Go to the hole that ye was hidin' in while *we* was makin' the fores'l fast."

III.

At four bells I relieved the man at the wheel. With the foresail off her the ship was certainly going along a little easier, but the weather was, if possible, getting worse; squall succeeded squall in rapid succession; the clouds seemed to be denser; the darkness was more overwhelming and broken only by an occasional phosphorescent gleam on the foaming crest of an approaching wave. Because of the blinding snow which accompanied the squalls I could rarely see the nearest of the sails which were set—the mizzen lower topsail —and had to judge how close the vessel was to the wind by the feel of it. She was carrying the helm about half down, and I seldom had to move the wheel; indeed, I could almost have gone to sleep at it but for the fact that occasionally a sea would strike the rudder in such a way as to start the wheel spinning so that it nearly tore the arms out of me, and once or twice it almost flung me over the top of it. It was a dreary monotonous business, and I fervently looked forward to the end of the watch as, with the collar of my oilskin coat pulled well up and my sou'-wester well down, I leant against the north-west gale, my head half-turned away from it, watching for the arm-jarring jolts of the wheel and noting the passing of the time by the too infrequent striking of the bell.

A tarpaulin had been lashed in the weather jigger rigging, and under it the captain and the second mate were sheltering. At intervals the latter would stagger aft to the lighted binnacle to see how the ship was heading, otherwise I was left to my own devices. About a quarter past three the wind lulled a little, the snow ceased, and both of them came along to the binnacle. The captain seemed to be restless and anxious; he looked around the horizon, then went below into the cabin. When he returned to the poop he had another look at the compass card in the binnacle, another long stare at the horizon, particularly to windward and right ahead, as if he were trying to read something there; then he spoke to the second mate.

"I don't like the look of it, mister," he said. "We ought to be on the other tack, you know. We will wear her round at eight bells."

My heart sunk. That meant a good slice off *our* watch below; in fact, it meant an extra hour at the wheel for me. The wind lulled still more, and after another prolonged stare ahead the old man again sought the cabin.

"I like the look of it less than ever, mister," he said when he returned. "The glass has stopped falling; it looks like a shift of wind, and we're on the wrong tack for it. The sooner it's eight bells the better."

His remarks call for a little explanation. The long-drawn-out gales of the southern hemisphere, such as the one we were then experiencing, usually commence with the wind from the north, backing to the north-west. It remains in that direction for some time, gradually increasing in strength, with a falling barometer and rain or snow. Eventually the barometer ceases to fall, then shortly afterwards, with little other warning except a clearing of the weather, the wind flies into the south-west and for a time blows harder than ever, the shift of wind being followed by a rapid rise of the glass. It follows, therefore, that to avoid being caught aback, the vessel just before the shift of wind should be on the port tack, so that the wind will shift aft. We were on the starboard tack, so that the shift would bring the wind from almost dead ahead. When a square-rigged vessel is caught aback—that is, with the wind blowing on the wrong side of her sails—she is in about as bad a predicament as she could well be; if she is carrying a press of canvas she will probably be dismasted, while even under short canvas as we were at the time, with the heavy sea that was running anything might happen.

For a few moments the old man fidgeted about, then his anxiety seemed to get the better of his consideration for the slumbering watch below.

"Strike one bell now, mister, and call the watch," he ordered.

The bell was struck; the second mate left the poop to gather together the men of his watch and to make preparations for the operation of wearing ship. Then suddenly the weight seemed to go out of the wind altogether, and the ship came almost on an even keel; the comparative silence was startling. Heavy rain commenced to fall. As if petrified the captain stared out on the lee bow, where, following his gaze, I could see a clearing low down in the sky. He quickly pulled himself together.

"Hard up the helm," he shouted to me.

Then he ran forward to the break of the poop, and as I spun the wheel round I could hear him roaring—

"Square the cro'jack yard. All hands on deck."

By this time it was almost a dead calm, the sails were slatting against the masts and the ship had not sufficient headway on her to enable her to answer her helm. She lay almost stopped and helpless, the waves breaking over her, or flinging her about, just as they wished. The clearing in the sky to the south-west grew and spread; its upper part seemed to be fringed with black clouds, which it was chasing before it, and from which large jagged masses tore themselves and seemed to come hurtling straight at the ship. Below on the main deck I could hear ropes running through sheaves and the shouts of the watch on deck, who were struggling with the crossjack yard; then those sounds were abruptly drowned as with a roar the wind struck the vessel two points on the port bow. It was a wild moment; sea and sky seemed to be mixed in one awful smother. The ship gathered sternway, which increased rapidly, and presently everything—sky, sea and ship—seemed to be rushing straight at me where I stood right aft; it was a weird and terrifying spectacle. The captain, who had come aft again, silently helped me to put the wheel amidships—had we put it over one way or the other it would have meant a smashed rudder—then he stood beside me, hanging on to the wheel as if he was paralysed. The ship was now pitching heavily.

A heavier gust than ever crashed at us from almost dead ahead; the clouds had passed away and it came from a clear sky. The great vessel's bow rising from a plunge appeared to hang for a moment, then instead of dipping down again it seemed to rise in the air. Higher and higher it rose. I looked fearfully behind me; the water was bubbling up over the half-round on to the poop and was nearly up to the wheel grating. Absolutely shaken and unnerved the old man let go the wheel, made a gesture of despair, and clutched with both hands at the sou'-wester on his head; then he turned to me, and in a voice that I could hardly recognise because of the tremble that was in it, he shouted—

"My God! she's foundering! She's going down by the stern!"

Although my instinct was to get forward away from that icy black water which was now almost up to my feet, I hung on to the wheel in a helpless agony of mind. My first thought was for my shipmates struggling down there on the main deck; but what could I do? What good would a warning be to them? Certainly the old man and myself would be the first to be engulfed, but in less than five minutes there would be no place of safety on board, not even the main truck; everything would have disappeared beneath the waves.

Bang! Bang!

Above the din and the roar of the wind there came two reports exactly like those produced by the firing of a section of field-guns. The great vessel's bow wavered and began to settle down again; very slowly at first, then with a violent sickening plunge into the trough of the head sea. We peered anxiously forward, wondering what had happened and what her next move would be; then we became aware of a small figure crawling along the poop toward us and clinging on to the skylight bars as it came.

"Fore and main topsails blown away, sir," the owner of it shouted, his shrill voice carrying well through the gale.

I recognised the voice as Tommy's. Even as he had screamed out his information, I had become aware that there was something wanting aloft; where the black strips of the fore and main lower topsails had been there was now a strange emptiness. The old man straightened himself up and the old ring of confidence had returned to his voice when he answered Tommy with the conventional—

"All right."

Then he turned to me.

"Thank God for that," he shouted.

IV.

Before long the vessel's bow began to swing rapidly to starboard; the fore topmast staysail of stout No. 0 storm canvas had stood, and was paying her head off the right way. The crowd down on the main deck by almost superhuman efforts had got the yards on the mizzen-mast round, and the mizzen lower topsail filling, the ship gathered headway again and began to fly through the water. I had crossed to the other side of the wheel and the old man had helped me to put the helm hard down, but for a time the ship was unmanageable and refused to look at her rudder. Although the wind had shifted, the sea was still running from the old direction and was nearly dead ahead, so that the ship was pitching her bows clean under and was threatening to bury herself. The seas were sweeping the main deck fore and aft. Eventually the rudder had its effect; the ship came up to the wind again and presently lay hove to on the port tack and comparatively safe.

Although the snow had ceased and it was now clear, it was colder than ever, for the wind was blowing straight up from the Antarctic. The captain went below and I was left alone on the poop hanging on to the jolting wheel. I had little hope of relief for some time; the yards on the fore and main masts had yet to be hauled round, although there were no sails set on them, and I knew that things on the main deck would be in a frightful state of chaos and that the watch would not be ordered below until everything had been cleared up. Braces would be out through the freeing ports, jammed under the spare spars, or entwined round the bulwark stanchions, and all hands would be diving for them in the icy water, for all the gear would have to be stopped up in the rigging ready so that it could be flung on the deck clear for running in case of an emergency. The time wore on slowly. Dawn started to creep in, and as it grew brighter objects aloft began to shape themselves out of the gloom; first the mizzen lower topsail, a narrow strip of canvas, sodden and black, straining furiously at the buckling yard to which it was bent; then I made out the main and fore masts with a host of small, ragged, fluttering pennons where the fore and main lower topsails had been. Farther forward the fore topmast staysail stood out nobly, but, for all that, the tall clipper looked very bare, draggled and forlorn, leaning over with no canvas set on three out of her four lofty masts. The waves seemed to be getting slightly smaller and were now running true with the wind, but occasionally one would mount, burst and fill the main deck green. The sky had turned a dull steely grey, and down on the lee quarter a few streaks of red gave promise that the sun, which we had not seen for days, would soon be rising.

I could see very few of the men about the deck, but, from their shouts, I knew that all hands were still working like beavers. I began to long for relief, for I was cold and tired and cramped. To my disappointment the galley funnel showed no sign of smoke ; not that it mattered to me at the moment, for the watch which was going below would get no coffee in any case, but I knew that the fire had been washed out the night before, and I was speculating on the chance of getting something hot for breakfast later on. At last from underneath the break of the poop I heard the mate's voice and knew that the time of my relief was not very far distant.

"That'll do, the watch," he shouted.

Then came another order—the most pleasant one that the windjammer sailor ever heard off Cape Horn.

"Grog—oh ! "

After our night of hardship we were going to be heartened by a tot of rum. I could picture the group of sodden, bruised and miserable wretches clustering round the open pantry hatch which was let into the break of the poop, waiting for the steward to hand out the strong liquor which would introduce a momentary glow of comfort into their frozen bodies, but not a soul could I see from my position at the wheel. After about five minutes Liverpool mounted the lee side of the poop and came along it with jaunty step to relieve me. He crossed over to windward and, taking advantage of the fact that there was no officer in sight, he stood in front of me instead of relieving the wheel in his usual seamanlike manner and, smacking his lips, he said—

"Smell me breath."

I could without undue effort.

"You surely have more than your whack there," I said.

"I have," he replied ; "I have two whacks."

"How did you manage that ? "

"Well, ye see, when the stooard starts to ladle out the grog, I lines up amongst the very first and has me tot. Then I hangs on for a bit an' by-an'-by Antonio comes along. 'Stooard,' I ses, glarin' at Antonio an' at the same time showin' him me fist in a business-like way, 'Antonio has come aft to say as how he don't want his tot an' I can have it.' 'Is that so, Antonio ? ' ses the stooard, an' Antonio, not bein' too keen on another 'puncha on da nose,' nods his head an' I drinks his grog. Sure it's a fine mornin'."

"I'm glad you like it," I said without enthusiasm. "Well, here you are. By the wind—she's carrying the helm nearly hard down."

Liverpool bit a chew off a

plug of tobacco, squared his shoulders and seized the spokes. "By the wind it is," he said. "An' ye had better hurry up or ye'll be losin' *your* whack too."

I was just in time; the steward was closing the pantry hatch, having served the last of the men. I was chilled to the very marrow of my bones; never have I wanted a stimulant more or relished it better, and the strong sweet liquor almost made me into a new man as I splashed along to the half-deck. It looked much the same as it had done when we left it at midnight except that various articles, such as socks, which had been missing for days and had evidently been reposing under the lower bunks on the port side, had washed out from their hiding-places now that the ship was leaning over the other way and were lying in the middle of the floor. Larry and Tommy had not wanted grog, but had come straight below and were asleep in their bunks; the former, who had a blood-stained bandage round his head—for he had been damaged in a collision with a bulwark stanchion—was moaning fitfully in his sleep. George, with haggard face grimed with salt spray and dazed bloodshot eyes, evidently about all in, was sitting on his sea-chest puffing at his pipe. As with dirty fingers, blue with cold, I fumbled at the buttons of my oilskins, we discussed the events of the night. As I could well imagine they had had a terrible time down on the main deck, up to their necks at times in the rushing water. There had been many narrow escapes from drowning, but when I mentioned the greatest escape of all, George looked at me in blank amazement and could not take it in. Indeed, I rather think that, despite the fact that I was senior to him, he would have called me a liar, only I happened to be slightly bigger and much handier with my fists than he was. It was now about six o'clock, and we would be called again at twenty past seven, so without further argument I clambered into my bunk and settled myself down amongst the wet blankets.

For almost the first time since I had been at sea sleep refused to come. My muscles began to bunch under the skin with cramp, but even after I had got them soothed, sleep failed me; my brain was busy, actively thinking over the events of the night. At last, about seven o'clock, I dozed off and commenced to dream. I was again at the wheel, and once more the ship's head began to lift. Higher and higher it rose until the ship was almost perpendicular and about to fall over on top of me; then I sat up in my bunk sweating with fright, just as seven bells went and the apprentice from the other watch came in to call us. His news was not too bad. The sea had moderated still more, and the deck was much drier, although it was still blowing pretty hard and was bitterly cold.

Presently I heard the tramp of feet on the deck. The watch on deck had got another main lower topsail out of the sail locker and were about to bend it. They had taken the gantline to one of the capstans and were heaving the sail up abaft the mast. One of them struck up the verse of a chanty—by his voice I recognised that the soloist was Belfast. Timed by the metallic clink of the capstan pawls, and accompanied by the humming of the wind in the rigging, the chorus commenced, swelled into a triumphant roar, then died away in a mournful cadence :—

"Blow, boys, blow,
For Cal-i-for-ni-o ;
There's plenty of gold, so I've been told,
On the banks of the Sacramento."

V.

During our next watch below I again mentioned the narrow escape which the ship had had, but met with the same reception ; indeed George, reinforced by the others, openly scoffed at me, with the result that I never spoke about it again, but waited my time confident that the two mates would be sure to refer to it before long and thus confound the scoffers. They did not, however, and I did not care to mention it to them for fear that *they* might laugh at me. The captain was, of course, unapproachable as far as I was concerned. In puzzling the thing out, I came to the conclusion that all hands fighting for their lives down there on the flooded main deck had been too much absorbed in their own troubles to notice anything out of the way, and besides, it was only a person standing right aft—as the captain and I had been—or right forward who would have got a clear view of what had happened. There had been no one right forward. The look-out man could not possibly have remained on the forecastle-head that night—he would have been washed off it—and, indeed, there had been no one on the look-out at all, for our vessel was so helpless that even had another ship been reported we could have done nothing to get out of her way. At times I even wondered if I had been mistaken as to the danger or if I had magnified it. But no ! There was not only the evidence of my eyes but also of my ears. There could have been no mistaking the bitter wail of the momentarily broken man who had stood watching in helpless suspense his vessel —the precious charge committed to his care—foundering with all hands under his feet. Although I kept my ears well open, I never once heard the incident referred to during the remainder of the voyage ; indeed, a good many years elapsed before I again had a chance to discuss it.

In May 1916, just after Kut fell, I, in common with a good many other officers of the original I.E.F. 'D' who had not been captured, got a month's leave in India. I spent my leave at a hill station, and at the conclusion of it returned to Bombay and there embarked on a hired transport—a very fine steamer—bound for Basra, where I was to rejoin my regiment. The transport, which was absolutely packed with officers and other ranks, sailed at noon, and about six o'clock in the evening a small gang of officers, of whom I was one, was hanging about the smoking-room door rather impatiently waiting for the sun to touch the horizon. Presently I saw, stuck up inside the smoking-room, a list of boat stations for the crew. I stepped inside and idly surveyed it, then suddenly noticed that the signature of the master at the bottom of it was familiar. Unless I was greatly mistaken, it was the signature that was on my indentures—that of my old skipper. I walked along forward hoping to get a glimpse of him on the bridge, but just before I got to it he emerged from his cabin and mounted the bridge ladder. Without doubt it was he. His closely trimmed brown beard was now completely grey; instead of the long black oilskin coat and sou'-wester with which I was so familiar, or the light tussore silk coat and soft felt hat that he used to wear in the tropics, he was now clad in spotless white with glittering shoulder straps, and the peak of his badge cap was heavy with gold braid; but there was no mistaking his broad sturdy figure. I did not care to disturb him just then, for he was obviously busy, so, the sun having set, I hastened back to the smoking-room intent on other business.

When I left the saloon after dinner he was still at his table, and I waited outside in the lounge for him. When he came out of the saloon he was accompanied by a general, with whom he stood talking. On principle I avoided generals, so I waited until the skipper went on deck, when I followed him and made myself known. Five minutes afterwards I was seated in his cabin, where even generals hesitated to intrude. What is more, I was invited to make it my home for the rest of the trip, and having been a sailor, I had even been made free of that sacred edifice the bridge. I felt that I was in for a good trip. Before long the skipper was calling me by my Christian name, and I was sirring him as if it were only yesterday, instead of nearly twenty years ago, that we had sailed together.

"Well, well," said the old man as he beamed at me, "I like to keep trace of all my old boys, but you had eluded me altogether. I never thought of looking in the Indian Army List for you." He glanced at one of my shoulder straps. "Nor did I expect that one of my apprentices would turn into a Rajput."

Many a boy had passed through the captain's hands in his old sailing-ship days, and most of them had been a credit to him. A few of them had been drowned, but most of them were now officers in fine steamers—a few actually in command—and nothing gave him greater pleasure than to have one of them come up to him in a shipping office or at his agents and say, "Don't you remember me, sir?" We yarned away about old times and old shipmates. I was not the only one of our batch who had 'swallowed the anchor.' Tommy had only half-swallowed it; he was in the Bengal Pilot Service and doing well; the captain had seen him quite recently. But Larry, the lugubrious, had gone the whole hog, and was now a Methodist parson somewhere in the Midlands; while George—well, I gathered from the old man that, in his opinion, George had done better than any of us. He was starring in musical comedy. The last time the old man had been in London he had sat in the stalls of a West End theatre and had recognised George on the stage. After the show was over he went round to the stage-door and sent in his card. George came down, fell on his neck, and afterwards gave him the time of his life. I determined that I also would call on George if ever I returned to Town. Presently the old man sat back in his chair and a mischievous twinkle came into his blue eyes.

"Do you remember the time that I caught you down the sugar cask?" he asked solemnly.

Did I remember it? Was I ever likely to forget it? It happened during my very first voyage to sea, when I was a very small nipper indeed. At the time the food on board was scarce and rather bad, and a state of war existed between the brightest brains of the half-deck and the rather dull-witted Scotch steward. The latter's life was one of perpetual worry; neither the pantry nor store-room which he controlled were safe from our depredations, and the culminating point in the war came when a bottled-gooseberry tart which had been made for the cabin Sunday dinner was spirited away from the galley, the attention of the cook having been successfully attracted elsewhere. After that the steward invoked the all-powerful assistance of the captain, who mustered us all in the cabin and lectured us severely.

"You won't get to windward of *me*," he stormed. "I know all your tricks—done 'em all myself—and the first one of you that I catch stealing gets a good rope's ending."

For a time this warning, if it did not entirely suspend operations, at least curtailed them. Then, one unfortunate day, I was sent down into the lazarette—the large store-room beneath the cabin, which was entered through a hatch in the cabin floor—to do some job for the steward. Shortly after we had gone down the steward left me, and remembering the presence of a cask of loaf sugar which I had paid attention to on a previous occasion, I crawled across some intervening cases and bags amongst which it was wedged, with the intention of having another go at it. I found it nearly empty, but managed to get out and eat a few lumps before I returned to my job. Then my conscience smote me—not for what I had done, but because I had forgotten my shipmates. I crawled back to the cask with the intention of securing a few lumps for them, and was well into it, head first and feet in the air, scraping around the bottom, when I heard a noise which indicated that the steward was returning. In an endeavour to make a quick exit from the cask my hands slipped and I dropped on to my elbows, my further struggles only wedging me into the cask more firmly. The old steward approached, then I heard his voice; he seemed to take in the situation at a glance.

"Imph'm! Aye, aye, och aye!" he said.

Without another word he left the lazarette and went up into the cabin. Still struggling to get out, I realised what he had gone for, and my surmise proved only too correct. Very shortly afterwards I heard two men coming down the ladder, then I heard the captain's voice.

"Oh, very nice," he said ironically. "Steward, bring me a short length of ratline line."

I heard the steward depart. In the presence of the captain I had, of course, ceased to struggle. Presently the steward returned, and I presume that he handed the captain the length of ratline. I was certainly in the very best position possible for receiving what was coming to me—but that will be about enough of *that*.

I determined to make a counter-attack.

"Do *you* remember," I said, "that time off the Horn when we were caught aback under three lower topsails and nearly lost her?"

To my discomfiture the captain regarded me with a vacant stare as if he did not know what I was talking about. For quite half a minute we sat in silence looking at each other, I rather sorry that I had spoken, while he, as it turned out, was bluffing. Then a gleam of comprehension—almost, I thought, of relief—came into his eyes.

"Of course," he said, "I had forgotten. You were at the wheel."

He nodded his head gravely, and then continued—

"I expect you have been pretty near death a few times during this war," he said, "but you were never nearer to it than you were that night. If those topsails hadn't blown away——"

He stopped abruptly and jerked his forefinger down toward the deck.

"Yes," he went on, "in less than five minutes she would have gone right under and sunk like a stone. More than that, I am perfectly convinced after what I saw that night that many a fine ship that was eventually posted as missing at Lloyd's after attempting a Cape Horn passage was lost the same way; and a damned silly way of losing a ship it was when you come to think of it. Well, well! I haven't discussed that business with a soul from that day to this."

"I tried hard to discuss it with the others in the half-deck, sir, but they laughed at me."

"Ah," he replied, "I was wiser than you. I realised at once that you and I were the only two on board who were likely to have noticed what had happened, so I lay low and said nothing. Why should I? I had committed a grave error of judgment in keeping her so long on the starboard tack and I certainly didn't want my name to be bandied about the seven seas as the man who nearly lost his ship because he was too soft-hearted to call the watch below. The next morning the mates sympathised with me because we had lost the topsails. I laughed it off—told them we would get new ones out of the insurance. As for the men, few of them would imagine that anything out of the way had happened; I expect some of them would think that it was a new way of getting the ship on to the other tack. But, by heavens! that was a wild night. *I* never want to see Cape Horn again. Hullo! five bells already—half-past ten. Go on, Rajput; it's time you were in bed."

FLIGHT INTO CHINA: LAST TRIALS.

BY P. S. NAZAROFF.

A FRIEND who arrived from Tashkend warned me that the Soviet authorities had found out that I was somewhere in Semirechie, and that orders had been given to the local Che-Ka to spare no effort to find me. It was vital to get away from Pishpek as soon as possible.

To put their agents off the scent and to mask my tracks I managed to get official orders to start on an expedition to the neighbourhood of Lake Balkash to prospect for useful minerals, while as a matter of fact I set off in exactly the opposite direction, to the south, making for Naryin on the Chinese frontier near Kashgar.

I drove out of Pishpek on 18th May in a light cart drawn by a troika of horses. I intended to ride one of these animals from the frontier to Kashgar and to send back the cart with the remaining pair. This time my driver was a smart young Kirghiz, Azamat Bek, a resourceful fellow of proved trustworthiness. Formerly he had been extremely rich, but now he was totally ruined, as after the rising of 1916 the Russians had stolen all his property and stock, although both he and his old father, who was killed, were loyal to the Russians, and he himself had done a great deal to help Russians who had suffered in the rising: he had saved from captivity among the Kirghiz seventeen Russian women and girls whom the rebels had taken off to Chinese territory. Azamat Bek had not been let into the secret of my destination and had no idea where I was bound for really. He merely thought that I was out on one of my usual expeditions into the mountains.

At Ak Biit there is a detachment of frontier guards of the Red Army, patrolling the entry and exit from 'Sovdepia.' I purposely delayed my arrival a day so as to pass this dangerous point on Trinity Sunday, when most of the Red patrols would have gone into the village of At Bashi to celebrate in the usual way, and the few who remained at their posts would, of course, be drunk too.

My calculations were brilliantly justified. At the post there was left only a Tartar and a Kirghiz, both illiterate. I showed them my imposing 'mandate,' specially drawn up for the occasion, instructing me to buy *mata* at the nearest possible place in Chinese territory, by order of the Soviet of National Economy at Tokmak. At the same time I soothed their hearts by giving them half a bottle of real, undiluted, genuine old vodka and three pounds of raisins, which were very much appreciated owing to the impossibility of getting sugar in the district. The Red guards grinned appreciatively, wished me a pleasant journey and success in my mission, asking me to come hurrying back and to bring their wives and children some nice brightly coloured *mata* to make frocks of.

"Our womenfolk are almost going about naked!" they exclaimed.

A feeling of intense relief, of real joy and freedom, came over me when this last post of Soviet Russia was left behind and my cart continued its road up to the lofty plateaux of Arpa and Chatyr Kul. Snow lay about the place in patches still, and in it I saw the tracks of wild sheep, foxes and wolves.

High up on the right above the hills there rose a column of cloud, just as though out of the crater of some volcano, black and threatening. This was the steam rising from the lake of Chatyr Kul (The Lake of the Tent). From the hills there opens out an extensive panorama over a vast plain, surrounded on all sides by not lofty, but very rugged, mountains with jagged peaks. Only a very small portion of the huge area of this basin is occupied by the lake itself, which is about fourteen miles long by about five or six broad. Here we were on the top of the central ridge of the Tian Shan, at an altitude of eleven or twelve thousand feet, yet to my astonishment, instead of glaciers, crags and cliffs, with which one associates such altitudes, here was a level valley covered with snow, and hills which would hardly be called mountains; the scene, in fact, rather recalled the polar regions of the far north. The ice on the lake was only just beginning to melt, which increased the illusion. Driving over this arctic valley was a misery. The whole area round the lake was covered with a deep, friable, thawing crust, beneath which was water, with streams, often quite deep, running in every direction, it seemed, with water, snow and ice mixed together. Our poor horses one moment were sinking in soft snow, another into the water, struggling, plunging and floundering. Then we had to unharness them and drag the cart out with ropes. In places where the snow had gone they stuck in a wet, treacly, clayey soil. Azamat Bek and I went on foot all the time, both wet through up to the waist and worn out by the effort. The tired horses had great difficulty in pulling even the empty cart, and I feared that we should end by spending the night in the open in the middle of this awful expanse of cold slush.

It was already nearly dark when we got through to the pass of Turgart, where there were a few tumble-down huts inhabited by a couple of Kirghiz families about quarter of a mile apart. The word 'pass' hardly seemed appropriate;

there is no sign of elevation here, and the cart bowled along easily without any suggestion of rising ground.

We stopped at the first, and here, in this stifling, dirty, dark hut we had to spend the night, dry ourselves and our clothes and have something to eat. A storm arose and a gale howled the whole night through, with a blizzard of whirling snow as dry as sand. The altitude was a good twelve thousand feet, and the slightest exertion made me feel the rarefaction of the air. Next morning we left the cart behind and, mounting our horses, rode on towards Chinese territory. There was snow all round us. About seven or eight miles farther uphill the road leads to a steep descent about a thousand feet down into a valley. At one time the road had been in very good condition, but now it was badly washed away, and although a light cart might have got down all right, it would have been very difficult to bring it back again. However, carriages from Kashgar and Chinese *mapui* manage to climb up sometimes and find their way through to At Bashi.

Down below the snow was already gone and the air noticeably warmer. The descent led to the beginning of a broad level valley where was the Chinese Customs Station. There was not, however, any Chinaman there, but only a few Sarts and Kirghiz.

We spent the night at the Chinese post, and in the morning I explained to Azamat Bek that I was going through to Kashgar and should not return to Semirechie. I gave him a written certificate to the effect that he had acted as driver with a cart and two horses and was sent back by me to Tokmak owing to " want of food for the animals." I gave him a handsome present, including my high shooting-boots, which threw him into an ecstasy of delight, as at that time the citizens of the most advanced and freest country in the world were for the most part going about almost barefoot.

I watched Azamat out of sight, and when he had gone and I was left alone without a companion I could not shake off a terrible fit of depression. I had now cut the last thread that connected me with the land of my fathers and I was left utterly alone in a remote and strange land, a very strange land, among strange and unknown people. Hard it was to imagine what was in store for me and what trials fate still held for me to go through. But the thought of freedom and my escape from Soviet slavery consoled me, afforded complete consolation, and a great calm settled upon me.

I took a mounted Kirghiz as guide and pushed on to the Chinese post of Kizil Kurgan, the Red Fort, where there was a police post to patrol the entrance into Chinese territory.

We rode fast, hurrying to reach Kizil Kurgan before dark for the crossing of the river Suyuk which flows past the actual fortress. In the evening the water is substantially increased by the snow melted during the day and the ford is impossible.

On the near side of the river there stood a small blockhouse or fort built of red stone, surrounded on all sides by lofty sheer cliffs and crags, mostly reddish in colour. Beyond the fort I could see the usual Kirghiz necropolis, so characteristic of the valleys of Tian Shan, the *mazarui*, also usually of red stone or clay. The place is appropriately named, as all around red is the dominating tint, although, thank God, politically the country was 'White,' for there was no Bolshevism here.

The general atmosphere, however, was gloomy, and produced a mournful impression of wilderness and lifelessness. There was neither grass nor shrub, nor yet anything green whatever; all around was bare stone or gravel.

On the roof of the fort there stood a tall Chinaman in a long black cloak, who looked with incredulous eyes at the sight of a Russian arriving from the north, from the fearful land of Bolshevism and Communism.

A Kirghiz policeman rode out to meet us across the river, showing us the best and safest ford.

"Who are you, and why have you come here?" asked the Chinese official, who spoke quite good Russian, when I dismounted and greeted him.

"I cannot let you go any farther; for that I must ask permission of the Dao-In, the Governor, of Kashgar," he continued when I explained why I had thus come to China. "But first of all let's go and have some tea," he added kindly, "and then we will see what we can do."

The little yard within the fort and the two modest rooms which afforded a home to this Chinaman struck me by their cleanness and neatness, while the Kirghiz policeman and Chinese servant astonished me by their discipline and respectful manners, two things which had long since been forgotten in Russia.

By the front door there were some official notices in Chinese, stuck to a board on the wall, intelligible, of course, only to the commandant of the fort; but on both sides of the door were eloquent emblems of Chinese justice, perfectly comprehensible to all: two long, fairly broad, thin lathes with handles. Hundreds and thousands of strokes on the thighs may be generously delivered upon the citizens of the Chinese Republic at the discretion of authority.

Glass after glass of tea I drank, real fragrant Chinese tea, sweet with sugar, such as I had not drunk for many a long day; the long and rapid ride and the rarefied air had given me a desperate thirst.

The white-washed walls of

the room were hung with Chinese newspapers from Shanghai, with advertisements and notices in English, which gladdened my eyes, as proof that I had reached the confines of the civilised world, that, God be praised! I was now in a '*burjui*' country, and that I had really extricated myself from that oppressive, murky, hermetically sealed crypt, the Land of Communism.

We sat late that night, each busy with his own correspondence, by the dim light of my last and only candle. I wrote a petition to the Dao-In requesting permission to enter his territory, and also a letter to the Russian and to the English Consuls, while the Chinaman carefully painted his hieroglyphics with a brush, giving a report of my arrival, a description of my person, and a request for permission to let me through to Kashgar. The messenger we had to send through on my horse, as the policeman's horse had been sent a long way away owing to shortage of food, and if my horse had stopped there, there was nothing at all to feed him with. I gave the messenger some money and sternly told him to feed and take care of the animal on the road.

The next morning the river had swollen and it looked impossible to ford it, so that the messenger was not able to leave till the following day. All that time the poor animal was left without any food except the bread that I gave it.

The time spent here at Kizil Kurgan was anxious and hungry. It was the very worst season of the year. All winter stocks had been consumed, and no fresh grass had yet appeared, and the Kirghiz' animals had been sent far away to the south. It was impossible to bring provisions and fodder up from At Bashi as they used to in the old days, though a few Kirghiz had tried to do so at the cost of their lives. We were short of food, too, for ourselves. The Chinaman's entire dinner consisted of boiled rice and a few special Chinese preserves, so that a ham from one of the pigs I used to pasture in Pishpek, which I had succeeded in bringing so far as a reserve, came in very welcome, and was the *pièce de résistance* of our scanty menu.

The weather fitted in with the gloomy atmosphere of Kizil Kurgan. The clouds were lowering, and at times there blew a cold penetrating wind which howled mournfully around the fort.

It was a hundred and twenty-five miles to Kashgar, and I had to drag out eight long, desperately dull, weary days on this deserted threshold of the inhabited world, waiting for the reply of the Chinese Governor. The commandant of the fort held out little hope of a favourable answer.

There was nothing to read. I whiled away the time in walks in the neighbourhood examining the rocks. I sat and yarned with the Kirghiz policemen. They told me that they were not taught to shoot and weapons were not given them.

"When it is necessary the officer will show us how to load a gun and shoot with it," said these remarkable soldiers.

Somewhere in the neighbourhood the Kirghiz get a lead ore which they smelt and sell the lead to the Chinese officer at the fort, who in turn issues it to Kirghiz hunters to bring him sheep and ibex. But at the moment even these wild creatures were so thin, from scarcity of food, that they were hardly edible.

At length, after a long and weary wait, the messenger arrived, bringing from the Dao-In a categorical refusal to admit me into Chinese territory, which was neutral, and the friendly advice to return 'home' to my 'fatherland'!

My letter to the British Consul was returned to me opened. Evidently they had read it and considered it superfluous to deliver it to its address; and the letter to the Russian Consul was returned sealed, with the observation that there was no longer any Russian Consul in Kashgar. By a special order the Dao-In gave a stern reprimand to the commandant of the fortress of Kizil Kurgan for admitting a Russian to Chinese territory, and gave him orders to send me back with an armed escort to the Russian frontier, with special instructions to disarm me and confiscate my rifle, about which, evidently, the commandant had not failed to report to his superior.

To this last demand I replied resolutely that I would not give up my rifle to any man, and that if they attempted to take it by force I would resist and open fire.

"All light!" assented the commandant gently, and did not insist.

It was a sorry journey back to my 'fatherland.' The rascal of a Kirghiz who had ridden my horse to Kashgar had tired it out, as I quickly found. Some rickety old crocks had been sent up for the commandant and for the gendarmes who formed my escort, which could hardly put one leg before another. There was only one decent one, a fine Karabair[1] from Ferghaná, formerly the charger of a *mingbashi*,[2] which, although dreadfully thin, still stepped out vigorously. Blood will tell, even up in these grim mountain deserts.

I remembered the tale of a Russian smuggler engaged in the contraband opium trade from Kashgar, whom I consulted about the secrets of the road.

"For these trips," he had told me, "we take the strongest horses we can get, with the greatest powers of endurance, as we have to ride great distances over mountain deserts without any feed, and so at the end of the trip the beasts are reduced to skeletons, and so starved that they chew each other's manes and tails."

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[1] A special breed of horses in Turkestan derived from a cross between Arab sires and Kirghiz mares.

[2] Literally, Commander of a Thousand, a functionary in charge of a district comprising several villages.

A cold and penetrating wind blew all the time and a dry cutting snow whirled round us, stinging our faces and eyes. Heavy leaden clouds covered the sky, and seemed to overwhelm everything. The north, where we were now riding, seemed murky and especially menacing. I was miserable and depressed indeed, for all hope of rescue was gone, and ahead I could see only the inevitable result.

My brain worked at high pressure, but I could think of no way out. Where could I go and what could I do in this cold, lifeless, mountain desert? It was a desert, too, where the rarefied air makes every movement an effort, and a man becomes flabby and weak as though in an advanced stage of anæmia.

At half-way, when my companions stopped to give the horses a blow, I felt my poor beast totter, and I barely had time to slip from the saddle when it collapsed. The poor brute was utterly done and could not carry me another yard. So I went on foot, leading him by the reins.

My escort went on ahead, in a hurry to reach a human habitation and shelter from the blinding snow. I was left behind alone with my wretched horse, who dragged more and more, getting slower and slower, keeping back even my slow pace. At last it tottered and again collapsed on the ground. I could see that its end had come. Its eyes rolled and tears streamed from them. I took out my last remaining rolls of native bread and gave them to the horse, but the poor brute was not even capable of chewing them, for they were as hard now as stone, so I broke them between two stones and fed him with the crumbs. Then I tried to find a few dried wisps of grass, which the creature took greedily. It was dying of starvation and exhaustion. Then one of the Kirghiz rode back, bringing me another horse. I told him to look after my animal and see if he could not bring it through to the *aul* after a little rest.

But even on this new horse I was not able to ride far; its pace grew slower and slower, and before long I had to dismount again and go on foot, leading this one, too, by the rein. The blizzard, hurricane and snow grew worse, the horse kept me back, the thin air, wind and cold stopped my breathing. At times the snowstorm raged so fiercely and was so blinding that I was afraid I should lose the path and spend the night in the open, which would probably mean freezing to death.

It was quite dark when I struggled up to the Customs

House post, worn out, dead beat and famished. I had not eaten anything since the morning and was, in fact, a complete wreck, both moral and physical.

A lot more snow fell during the night, and it was very cold, although it was now the 9th of June. To all intents and purposes we were in the polar regions with an arctic climate. The escort conducted me to the Russian frontier and, to my great relief, left me there, as the Chinese officer and the Kirghiz gendarmes decided that it was better not to go through to Ak Biit, which was about another fifty miles, and the road round the lake Chatyr Kul was difficult and dangerous. This saved me from being handed over to the Red frontier guards.

I was left at Turgart and found shelter in a poverty-stricken hut belonging to an old Kirghiz with his family, nearly half a mile from the one where I had spent the night on my way up.

My situation was now about as hopeless as it could be; neither horse nor other means of transport for getting away anywhere, and, to crown my misfortunes, my financial resources had almost come to an end. I could, in fact, not see any way out of my desperate situation.

External conditions, too, seemed as though they had been specially designed to drive a man into despair. In the morning occasionally the sun would show his face for a brief moment and there would be a respite from the snow, but in the afternoon the storm would begin again and the blizzard would rage the whole night long. The horizon was all the time covered with lowering leaden clouds. Below, from the basin of Chatyr Kul, as though out of an enormous crater, there arose a column of black evil-looking clouds which crept over towards us and enveloped us in a blanket of hurricane and snow, till my very soul seemed blotted out in blackness and despair.

The hovel, built of lumps of clay with crevices in the walls and a leaky door, gave no protection against the weather. Fuel there was hardly any, and when the fire was lit it filled the air with a biting, acrid, suffocating smoke. Everything was dirty and poverty-stricken. The old Kirghiz, owner of the hovel, was a very decent and obviously sincere fellow, who gave me the best hospitality in his power. Seeing my hopeless situation, he consoled me by saying that sometimes smugglers came this way who could get me through secretly past the Red frontier patrols and deposit me in the valley of At Bashi, where I could easily hide in the dense forest.

"And then perhaps you'll be able to find someone who will be able to smuggle you into Kashgar, past both Red and Chinese patrols. There are secret paths where they smuggle opium, through Kara-Teke-Davan,[1] through Urta-Su and the country of the Sary-Bagishi. Only take care and don't trust these, as they are terrible brigands and often enough kill and rob travellers. Of course you'll have to ride by night and hide by day in the gullies," he told me, doing his best to comfort me; "but whatever happens, do not despair," added the good old soul, "*khudai ga salamuis!*"[2]

This was all very well, but there was little hope in it. It was all a matter of chance, on which I could count but little. It seemed to me that only a miracle could extricate me from my desperate position.

The days passed, each one lessening my hope of ever succeeding in escaping from this dreadful place.

At last, one evening, through a whirring blizzard we heard the crunch of feet in the snow. My host went out and brought in a couple of Kirghiz smugglers, followed a moment later by two more. They had five camels with them, laden with goods from Kashgar. They willingly consented to take me with them over the frontier to the forest of At Bashi. So the next afternoon, to my inexpressible delight, I rode away at last from that abode of misfortune.

The usual storm was in full swing, covering us with thick wet snow, which prevented us from seeing the road. Only at one place could I discern that we were riding up a gentle rise over a beautiful grey marble veined with white.

Towards evening we came to the foothills of the mountains on the northern bank of the lake and bivouacked in a hut built of stones at the entrance to the gorge of Taush Ravat.

The next morning was fine and clear with a sharp frost. The sun was shining brightly, throwing a deep blue light on to the thawing parts of the lake, and a flock of wild geese flew along the shore. Evidently spring was beginning here. The warm period in these localities is very short. Green grass makes its appearance in July. The Kirghiz drive up their flocks for a brief spell, and at the end of August the frost begins again, and in September the lake is once more covered with ice.

Lower down the gorge widens into a valley. Farther on still we rode out into a broad plain surrounded with mountains on every side and covered with bright green grass.

Here we turned off from the main valley to the left and struck up-hill, without any path, then dropped into a dry gorge and stopped there, waiting for darkness. By night we went right over the hill and made our way down by a game track to At Bashi.

When it was light we found ourselves on the bank of the river Kara Kain and rested at a Kirghiz farm after having successfully passed through all the risks attached to a journey over the frontier. Once again I was in the territory of the Soviet Socialistic Republic, under the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, and therefore once more had to keep my eyes exceedingly wide open and exercise the greatest caution.

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[1] Black Goat Pass.

[2] Let us trust in Allah.

We made a wide detour round the hills to avoid the township of At Bashi and came into dense thickets on the banks of the river. We then forded its wonderfully bright and clear water, over the mosaic of stones on the bottom, came out into a forest of big trees and quickly reached a wooden hut. Here was one of our Whites, a former Cossack officer, a first-rate horseman and *djigit*, or trick-rider. Here, in the guise of a forester, he was hiding from the Che-Ka. It is sad to think that this fine fellow, gallant officer and keen patriot, was shot by the Bolsheviks not long after, together with his wife and little child.

In this interesting locality I spent a whole month. The livelong day I wandered about the forest, coming back to the forester's hut only for the night. My food consisted of bread, milk, butter and fish. The cows grazing in the fat grass of the water meadows gave us milk in abundance, and the sparkling waters of the stream that ran through the forest were full of trout; all we had to do was to build a little weir of faggots and branches across the stream, and in the morning there would be a dozen or more fine trout in it.

It was by no means easy to find a Kirghiz guide who would face the risk of taking me through to Kashgar secretly, past both Russian and Chinese frontier guards, especially as I had hardly any money left.

Suddenly there was a heavy fall of snow on the mountains and all the passes were stopped except that of Ak Biit, where the Red Army patrols were now reinforced. The frontier guards all along the line were strengthened and fresh detachments of Red troops kept arriving.

At the beginning of July the snow in the passes began to thaw, and I found an experienced and resourceful Kirghiz, named Tursumbai, who had been through to Kashgar several times with opium smugglers, so that he knew the road well and was up to all the tricks for dodging the frontier guards of both countries. As the price for getting me safely through into Kashgar I promised him my last remaining valuable, my gold watch, then worth about two hundred thousand roubles.

In the meanwhile I had heard from one of my friends in Naryn the alarming news that the local Ispolkom had received an inquiry from Verny as to the whereabouts of the "organiser of the rebel bands in Ferghaná," believed to be hiding somewhere in the district, with instructions to take the most active steps to find this enemy of the Workmen and Peasants' Government. Fortunately by that time I had everything ready for my departure.

Unceasing rains set in, and on the third day, when the river At Bashi was swollen into a broad foaming torrent, a turbulent mass of turbid brown water and bubbling dirty froth, nearly three-quarters of a mile wide in places, so that fording stopped, when all the burns and brooks came crashing down the gorges, Tursumbai came and told me that this was the most favourable moment for our journey.

"Everybody will be stopping at home now," he said, "and the Red soldiers will be resting and drinking. Allah will help us ford the river and no one will see us on the road."

We started. It was dusk, and we were at once hidden in the thickets on the banks, through which we rode a considerable distance looking for a suitable place to ford. It was raining hard and a thick mist hung over the valley.

It was by no means without hesitation that our horses stepped into the torrent, which was coming down in waves. A cold foaming mass of water and dirt gripped us. In places the water was not higher than the horses' knees, but the force of the current piled it up on the up-stream side of us as behind a dam and it reached my knees; there were moments when the stream actually lifted my horse, although she was on the bottom; then I was in up to the waist, and around me saw nothing but a brown whirling mass of foaming waves. The rain was coming down in floods. It was hopeless to try to guide the horse, and I let her have her head, so that she followed the other leading in front.

When at length we reached the opposite bank, it looked as though it were streaming past us and that our horses were standing still, a common illusion when fording a broad and rapid river.

We rode all night and the rain never stopped. As it was quite dark, it was only by the sound of the hoofs that I could tell whether we were riding on hard ground, on grass, or through a marsh. The dawn found us in a lonely ravine near some tumble-down Kirghiz huts, where we found shelter to dry ourselves and have some food and sleep before tackling another night's ride.

Early in the morning after, when we were riding into a rocky defile to spend the day, we saw in the far distance the figures of two Russians on horseback, evidently patrols from the post of Ak Biit. To avoid them we had to ride a long way on the rocky bed of the defile to mask our tracks and penetrate as deeply as possible into the mountain gorges.

The next night was the

critical one for us, as we had to pass by the mountain round the frontier post of Ak Biit, where the Red patrols might ride out to look for smugglers, even at night. But my guide was a very experienced and resourceful smuggler, a real 'mountain wolf,' as we say; and in spite of the darkness he picked his way so cleverly that we were riding either on soft sand or grass, so that the sound of the hoofs against stone would not betray us. We worked our way by the tops of the mountains above the post itself, and far below us could see the fires of the guard-houses and hear the distant barking of dogs.

Thus for the third time I successfully crossed the Soviet frontier, and this time I felt sure that I was leaving the confines of wild 'Sovdepia' for the last time and bidding farewell definitely to the Empire of Communism.

Presently some Kirghiz rode up on enormous, shaggy, great yaks, and gave us some first-rate *kumuis*.

Then we rode on quietly to a big *aul*, sprawling over the lofty valley of Arpa, where some relatives of Tursumbai lived, to change our horses for fresh ones. The rest of the road lay through the unpopulated, dry and stony mountains of Chinese territory, and we required fresh, strong, well-fed animals, or else we might have to continue our journey on foot, as had already happened to me.

In the *aul* we were absolutely safe. The Kirghiz detested the Bolsheviks and would never have betrayed us. Here it was cold, and they were all wearing furs. A biting northerly wind was blowing. We made our quarters in a big *yurtá* belonging to a respected old greybeard and his family.

After some tea our host asked me—

"Where is the Ak Padsha now, the White Tsar Nikolai?"

"He and all his family, the Tsaritsa, their daughters and son, have been killed by the Bolsheviks," I answered.

The old man gave a deep sigh, his head dropped a moment and then he asked me—

"And you, are you of white or black bones? Nikolai *vakht adamlar-ma syz?* Are you one of the men of the régime of Nikolai?"

"Yes, of course," I replied; "I detest and despise the Bolsheviks."

The old man took me by the hand and pressed it firmly. I felt his hand tremble in mine. He began to blink, and a tear rolled down his cheek, while the rest of the family sobbed, the women groaning aloud, and then there was silence in the tent.

I was deeply touched by the scene. On this remote frontier of the Russian Empire, in the depths of the mountain fastnesses, a family of nomad herdsmen was weeping for the tragic death of their White Pasha, as the Tsar was known throughout Central Asia.

Now once again our road lay to the lake of Chatyr Kul and the pass of Turgart. Although the country round was green and dotted in places with iris and tulips, when we started a light dry snow was falling and whirling round us in the strong wind. This did not stop till the afternoon, when, after passing a small hill, we dropped down into the basin of Chatyr Kul. Here the snow had disappeared and the lake had almost entirely thawed, but there was hardly any green to be seen except a little miserable grass, all dried up, a relic of the previous season.

We spent the night at Turgart in the same hut where I slept on my first visit there. The gale blew all night, driving a fine dry snow.

The morning was bright and sunny, but very cold. A brook running down from Turgart was covered with a film of ice.

Here we left the road and turned due east. We rode a long time on the tops of hills, avoiding the ravines and gullies, coming down to a broad, elevated, hummocky plain which extended far away towards the east, where we could see a steep headland, the extremity of a small ridge and the pass of Terek. Then we began to go down the upper part of the valley of the river Kaska Su.

Two roads were open to us. One down by the Chokmak Tash and over Kara-Teke to Black Goat Pass, where there is a large Chinese post which it was impossible to get round. The other through the country of the Sary Bagishi, who have a very bad reputation, and through the pass of Urta Su, where there is no post, but where we might be exposed to an attack by the Sary Bagishi, who might rob and kill us. Both these roads come out into the valley of the Urta Su in a narrow gorge which we could not avoid, where there is always a post of Chinese soldiers guarding the road day and night; the chief of the post, Abdulla Bek, was well known for his severity and cruelty.

I was for the first, trusting to my rifle and a good stock of ammunition; but Tursumbai was for the second alternative, confident in his cunning and ability to get through anywhere by night.

After a long discussion I agreed with Tursumbai, relying on his experience, and we started down the river to the pass of Kara-Teke.

The farther we went, the narrower and deeper the ravine grew, and then passed into a rocky gorge, and we rode along the actual river bed, sometimes sandy, sometimes stony. We had to ride first on one side and then on the other.

About two or three miles farther down, before reaching the Chinese post, we stopped to bivouac in a small bay in the valley where there was a little grazing for our horses and the isolated *yurtá* of a Kirghiz, who received us in a very friendly way.

"Load your rifle to be on the safe side," whispered Tursumbai to me, "and keep it near you; these people are not to be trusted and I will not go to sleep."

My guide cross-examined our host in detail and at great length about the road and the best way to avoid the Chinese post.

"You can't avoid the post at all," said the Kirghiz; "the walls of the gorge are vertical and the path is very narrow; besides that, at the top of the pass there is always a special patrol. But if you want to get through without being noticed," he went on, "I advise you to turn back and about a couple of versts along you will see a narrow little gorge on the right; ride into it and it will bring you out at a pass which is very steep and exhausting; but you can get through all right, and then you can find your way to a small stream which will bring you out into the valley of the Urta Su. This pass is quite unknown to the Chinese and is not guarded at all."

Tursumbai kept up his questioning a long time to find out all about this path, and then at last he said in a decided tone of voice—

"If the Chinese won't let Russians through to Kashgar, it isn't worth while going there; better go back to At Bashi."

I saw what his idea was, and pretended to agree with him, but afterwards, when we were riding along, I asked him why he was so diplomatic in dealing with the old man, as he seemed quite well disposed to us.

"You can't trust the people round here," he replied. "He tried to persuade us to go by a roundabout way, and then, as soon as we were well on the road, he'd go and report us to the Chinese post, so as to curry favour with them, and then they'd catch us on the Urta Su."

In the morning when we rode back on the way we had come, the owner of the *yurta* came with us quite a long way, trying to persuade us all the time to go up the secret path he had told us about. This made me quite sure that Tursumbai was right in his suspicions, so I said in a most decided voice that I refused to take the risk and would go back to At Bashi. I thanked the man for his hospitality, said good-bye and started off at a trot. Tursumbai followed.

We did not turn off into the gorge the old man had told us about but rode on, and only stopped when we had got well past a bend in the road in a bay in the cliffs, where we waited a considerable time to see whether or not we were being followed. My cautious guide watched long and attentively, and it was only when we felt quite sure that the road was clear that we started back and rode up the narrow gulch, which rose steeply towards the pass. Then it widened out a little, and there was a little vegetation, some grass and a few shrubs. Then again bare crystalline schist, cliffs and screes, and banks of dirty snow.

The pass was very steep, and we had to ride zigzag up the loose gravel screes, which slipped and gave way under the horses' feet. We had to keep stopping to give the animals a blow. The poor brutes were gasping heavily, their flanks heaving, and I could feel the heart-beats beneath the saddle. At the top of the pass there was a thick bed of dirty snow mixed with stones and dust.

It was a strange view from the top: there was an enormous, apparently endless, expanse away to the south. The crags dropped steeply, almost vertically, it seemed, and far below us at the feet of our mountain there extended a sea of narrow, rocky, absolutely bare, barren crests, with hardly discernible ravines between them, without a single sign of life or green thing. Everywhere a stony desert, a wilderness of rocks and crags.

Far, far away, at the very edge of the horizon itself, at the end of this sea of rocks, I could just detect a plain with a thick cloud of dusty haze overhanging it. Above it was all illuminated with the brilliant burning light of the south. I guessed that that was the plain of Kashgar, the longed-for goal of my persistent efforts, the land of promise for me, an unhappy persecuted refugee! But between us there still remained two days, or rather two nights, of toilsome road.

To the south-west, above the dusty blanket which covered the plain, there arose a light conical mass, white like a clean cloud, raised high above the earth. This was, as I learnt afterwards, Qungur, the highest point of the Pamirs, a giant of 25,146 feet, beside which Mont Blanc, with its 15,784 feet, and our Caucasian Elbruz, with its 18,573 feet, are but hills.

I learnt afterwards that at the very time when I first saw the plain of Kashgar and was overjoyed at the sight of the goal of my wanderings, a detachment of Red guards arrived hot on my heels at Turgart. Obviously the Che-Ka had got on to my tracks, but too late! I was by then across the frontier and well away in a spot where even the lords of the land could not see me. Luck, bordering on a miracle, accompanied me all the time of my escape from the Bolsheviks.

The way down was very steep; we had to dismount and lead our horses, which was not easy. The rocks consist of shales folded in various ways. Here and there was a patch of fresh green grass that had found a foothold among the stones, with some white or mauve primulas. In a nullah we found a small patch of green grass and a delightful spring of fresh clear water, where we stopped to rest, have something to eat, give the horses a feed, and wait for evening, so as to ride farther down the gorge under the cover of darkness.

The night was extremely dark, and I could not even see my horse's ears ; I made no attempt to guide him, but simply held him up in case he stumbled. I could hear that some of the time we were riding on stones, at others on loose gravel, which rattled and rolled under the hoofs, sometimes on soft sand between some great big clumps. Sometimes we went down-hill very steeply, as though at the edge of a precipice, for when a stone was dislodged by a horse's hoof I could hear the noise for a long time ; at another time we were climbing a steep cliff, at another again going down almost vertically, so much so that I had to balance myself in the saddle so as not to upset the horse's equilibrium, when we might disappear together down the abyss.

Like this we avoided a camp of Kirghiz, no longer our folk, but Chinese subjects, from which we could hear the furious barking of dogs who had evidently heard us, but as Kirghiz dogs usually bark all night long uninterruptedly, which is credited to them as the chief function of a watchdog, nobody paid any attention to us.

This was the first time my guide had been by this road, but thanks to his lynx eyes he was able to pick his way perfectly well.

We kept getting lower and lower until at length we found ourselves riding along the level gravelly bed of a brook, avoiding the big boulders, and constantly crossing and recrossing the stream.

It became oppressive and very hot ; there was not a suggestion of a breeze, and the air was reflected from the rocks as though out of an oven. That evening I had eaten the last remains of my ham and now was tormented by thirst. Besides that, I was much too warmly dressed for this locality. After all, it was well on in July, the hottest season in the Kashgaria. And that same morning I had been quite cold even in my thick clothes up there near the perpetual snow. I wanted to drink desperately ; my throat and mouth were parched and inside I felt on fire ; although our horses' feet were often in water, I resisted the temptation, as I knew well how dangerous it is to drink water from an unknown source.

At length it grew a little lighter ; I could distinguish the outlines of the mountains against the sky and on the right the shadows of some immense poplars.

" This is the gorge of Urta Su," said Tursumbai. " This is where the road comes out through Urta Bel and the Terek pass. I know this road well ; now let's ride on a bit faster so as to get past Abdulla before daylight."

Then the gorge narrowed

again, and it was dark once more.

After a few minutes Tursumbai said—

"We are just coming to the most dangerous bit of all; it is very narrow with vertical walls; we can't get round, the Chinese sentry is on duty day and night. Still, with care we'll get through all right. Inshallah."

Soon on our right we could see the dark mass of some wall and on the left a camel snorted and stepped aside; evidently it had been standing in the path. A pack of dogs flung itself at us out of the darkness, barking savagely, and the voice of a Chinaman called out something, probably "Who goes there?" I froze.

At that very moment another pack of dogs appeared out of the darkness and furiously attacked the first; there was a perfect pandemonium, and the Chinese guard shouted out something again, this time in a different voice, probably swearing at the dogs. The din effectively masked our steps and—God be praised!—the danger spot was behind us!

When it was light we rode out on to a broad desert. On both sides there were rows of small hills; by daylight I could see that the water in the river was full of dirt, and in spite of my raging thirst I held out longer, until we came to a brook where, though muddy, it was fresh and cold. Here Tursumbai filled his *tursuk*, a leather bottle made of smoked skins, in which he had a few drops of sour milk. We then turned towards the east, between the rows of hills, where we chose a suitable secluded spot to stop and rest.

The sun came out in a cloudless sky and at once began to burn pitilessly. I lay under a shrub, and by throwing my overcoat over it fixed up a little bit of shade. The horses were tied together and covered with anything handy to protect them against the burning rays. They had to stand about the whole day without food, and it was only in the evening that they got half a handful of barley each. Luckily, and quite unexpectedly, a cloud suddenly came out from behind the mountains, accompanied by a peal of thunder and a few big isolated drops of rain, and then a heavy hail. This was an unexpected stroke of luck; the air was at once cooled down, and for the rest of the day a gentle breeze fanned us pleasantly. The deserts of Kashgar welcomed me with a smile. The drops of rain were really thawed hailstones, as it is probably only in this form that moisture can reach the heated air near the ground; in the form of raindrops they would be evaporated in the air, as I have often been able to observe in the deserts.

The dark night had already set in—the last before Kashgar, as Tursumbai told me—when we left our shelter and set out by an obscure path well away from the Terek, the Kirghiz *auls* and the frontier posts. Once more I had occasion to be astonished at the extraordinarily keen sight of my companion. I could not see either his back or his horse, although I was following close behind him, yet he picked out his way unhesitatingly, and if he missed it he picked it up again quickly and rode on quite confidently. After a time we came out on to a broad path and here we moved pretty fast. It was probably about midnight when my horse suddenly stopped, and, although I could not see anything at all, I heard a conversation between my guide and some other Kirghiz.

"You can't ride this way; you'll bump right into a Chinese patrol; the place between the river and the fort is very narrow and the soldiers will stop you. Ride through the *kapchigai*, the gully, and look out for the *mazar* shrine, where there is a soldier on guard, a Kirghiz," said an unknown voice.

We turned sharply to one side, and I could distinguish the smell of camels and the breathing of horses as we rode by. I cannot understand how my guide found the trail now that we were riding not only off the path but even without any tracks to follow, straight ahead in an unknown locality, choosing the way somehow or other. But he rode on confidently and only once asked me to strike a match to have a look where we were. It turned out that our horses were up against an absolutely perpendicular cliff which blocked our road. About ten paces farther on the rocks parted to form a narrow, hardly perceptible pathway. This was the *Kapchigai*. Another time, when in the gulch, he again asked me for a match to have a look at the tracks on the ground, as he thought that we were off the trail.

A long spell of wakeful nights and the impossibility of sleeping properly in the daytime had tired me out. I was desperately sleepy. Every now and then I began to dream and thought I was falling out of the saddle. Sometimes I awoke with a shudder, wondering when and how I had dropped off and how long I had been dozing. The impossibility of seeing where we were going made me sleepier than ever. In vain I tried to occupy my mind with some sort of meditation, thinking over old memories, to concentrate my thoughts on some object and banish sleep. But it was no good. At length it began to grow light, and I could just pick out surrounding objects and felt a little easier.

Presently we rode into a grove of withered trees near an old *mazar*. Suddenly Tursumbai turned sharply back, leant forward in the saddle, and, signing to me with his finger on his lips, quickly slipped down a narrow little gully at the side. We soon rode away from the dangerous place. It seems that we had almost ridden right into the very patrol against whom the Kirghiz had warned us.

About a mile farther on Tursumbai stopped his horse and exclaimed—

"Now praise be to Allah! we have passed all the guards; now the road to Kashgar is open."

And he broke out into a cheerful song, the first time that he had struck up since we had been on the way. I was enormously relieved; my acute anxieties were over. This time at last I should reach Kashgar all right.

We now rode out on to a broad, flat, gravelly plain, completely dry and covered almost entirely by desert plants, such as the camel grass, *Alhagi camelorum*, and here we disturbed a herd of gazelle, which disappeared from sight in a moment.

To our left, in the east, on the horizon, there rose some separate, very lofty, steep mountains of peculiar outline. These were the heights at the mouth of the Terek. The plain rose regularly towards the south, and we imperceptibly came to an absolutely barren expanse.

Then there followed beds of conglomerate which form a fairly high, steep, strongly eroded cliff, through which the path goes into a deep, extremely narrow gully, very twisty, for several miles, with almost perpendicular walls. And I rode into my promised land through this strange almost subterranean corridor. In places there were lateral gullies in which I could see fantastic outlines of arches, caverns, grottoes, columns and so on, forms of what is known as the vertical desert erosion.

At last this dark and gloomy defile came to an end abruptly, and before my eyes there was unfolded, brilliantly illuminated in the southern sun, the picture of an oasis and . . . I thought I was back in Ferghaná! Everything down to the smallest detail was exactly the same as in Ferghaná, which I knew so well. The fields of *djugar* or sorgo, of cotton, rice, tall slender poplars, *djidy* trees, the so-called Babylonian willow,[1] apricot and peach trees, willows, even the wild plants on the dry clay soil, were the same, the same low shrubs of dark-green tamarisk with their feathery tufts of pink flowers at the ends, the same tall rushes and thorns.

We rode into the gateway of a new caravanserai that stood a little way off the road, probably a den for smugglers, where a well-deserved rest awaited us in the clean and roomy *chai-khané* or tea-room. It was the seventh day since we had ridden out of At Bashi, and the last stage, since the previous evening we had ridden fourteen hours without dismounting, so we deserved our rest. The rooms were excellent. The walls were hung in panels with a material with a pretty blue pattern, with pleasing porcelain cups and dishes of various colours in niches. Everything bore the seal of cleanliness and order, even distinction, a very striking contrast to the filthy evil-smelling dens that are called rest-houses in Semirechie.

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[1] *Eleagnus hortensis.*

I did not feel exhausted by the long ride, but desperately wanted to drink and was very sleepy, and so, after countless glasses of tea, I slept like a top, with the blessed slumber of a man relieved from acute anxiety in the knowledge of achievement.

We awoke about two in the morning, drank some more tea, and started off again. It was light by the time we had ridden through the oasis and come into just such another mountain road as we had passed yesterday, and once more we rode through a narrow corridor, but even longer, more winding and apparently interminable.

At last it brought us out into the plain of Kashgar, all glowing in morning sunlight, a mass of green gardens and fields through which lay our road. It was bordered with shady willows and elms, and along both sides were rows of native farms, orchards, little shops, and cemeteries with the old-fashioned *mazarui*, bordered with walls of open brickwork. Uninterrupted fields of clover extended for miles, of *djugar*, sorgo, wheat, which they had already begun to reap, tall slim poplars and big apricot trees, studded with the beautiful golden fruit.

Here around me I could see on every side the calm and peaceful work of men and the abundant fruits of the soil. What a contrast with the "bright empire of the toiling masses" which I had left behind me! The faces of passers-by did not wear that look of nervousness and oppression which we see on everyone on the other side of the Tian Shan. People were cheerful and had pleasant smiles, although under the Chinese Government this country is by no means a care-free Arcadia. On every hand they kept asking where had we come from and offering us fruit, rolls and drinks of cold water. There were no Chinese to be seen; the population consisted of Sarts, just as at home in Turkestan.

In the shade of massive trees merchants exposed their wares—fruits, bread, fresh water in high earthen jars that might have come out of some museum for classical antiquities.

Thicker and thicker became the traffic on the road; shops were more frequent and traders more numerous; the trees closer together, and suddenly there glistened a strip of water, a broad and rather muddy river, a long wooden bridge over it, a massed throng of people, donkeys, the local cabs with a tent extending forward over the horse, the sound of bells, all the hum and chatter of the bazaar, then there appeared the great city gates in the massive broad embattlemented walls—and I was in Kashgar!

I did not ride into the town. We turned to the right and rode along past the walls, which had high towers at the corners and were crumbling badly in places, past another smaller bazaar, and reined up before a European house surrounded by a shady garden, with a Russian notice: "Russian-Asiatic Bank."

. . . . . .

Half an hour later I was sitting on the verandah enjoying breakfast. The snow-white table-cloth, the irreproachable service, the glistening silver, the flowers in vases, the comfortable furniture, the almond cakes, biscuits, sugar, American and English newspapers, everything transported me into a world of civilisation and culture.

It was a strange and unaccustomed feeling. I had the sensation of perfect bliss. It seemed that I had awakened out of a long, long sleep full of fearful dreams and nightmares. I had returned to my old life, to the normal course of ideas. The old familiar past had returned to me, the dear old past which I had thought gone for ever, destroyed by the savages who had ruined my country. The wild life, every kind of privation, hunger and thirst, persecution, all this was already a thing of the past. That murky tomb, that huge asylum of madmen which today represents my unhappy fatherland, was now left behind, thank God! far beyond the snowy peaks of Tian Shan. Once again I was in a world of decent normal people.

Five minutes after my arrival an orderly from the Dao-In presented himself at the Consulate to inquire who and by what means had someone arrived in Kashgar out of Soviet Russia. Later I called upon the Russian Consul and within an hour I was receiving a young very polite official, speaking quite good Russian, who was sent by the Dao-In. He congratulated me on my safe arrival in Kashgar, inquired about my health, and hoped I felt at home in my new surroundings.

"I do not know," I replied, "I do not yet know whether I am still in this sinful world, or whether, rising higher and higher in the mountains, I have arrived without noticing it in the old paradise of the *burjui*, in heaven!"

This answer pleased the Chinaman immensely. He took it as a compliment to Chinese culture and the loving care of the administration for the good of the country.

The Chinese are extremely fond of flattery and politeness, and their idea of good form calls for the nicest and most complimentary expressions in conversation, however extravagant. The young official had heard of my speciality, and asked me, in the name of the

Dao-In, whether I would undertake to help the Chinese administration in the study and exploitation of the mineral resources of the country.

In accordance with Chinese etiquette, the day of my visit to the Dao-In was fixed in advance.

Everything seemed smiling, but, as we shall see, events turned out to be the very opposite.

Having done with formalities, I now paid a very necessary visit to the barber, followed up with a magnificent hot bath, and then was relieved to see in the mirror, not the hairy physiognomy of an inhabitant of savage 'Sovdepia,' but the respectable face of a civilised man. I was myself again, and could once more appear under my real name. As to the unfortunate surveyor Novikoff, who had been sent on duty simultaneously in opposite directions to Balkash and to Naryn, did the Soviet authorities notice his disappearance from the scene? The administration in Verny, capital of Semirechie, received official reports from Naryn that the surveyor Novikoff was drowned, together with his horse, fording the river Chu when in flood. The Bolsheviks never found out that the unfortunate surveyor who died in the execution of his duty and their unrelenting enemy whom the Che-Ka was pursuing so actively were one and the same man.

I was received with open arms by the European colony in Kashgar. They were not very numerous, consisting chiefly of Russians who had arrived here before the revolution. The old Russian Consulate was still in existence, and the Russo-Asiatic Bank, the director of which, V. V. Bogushevsky, extended to me the most generous hospitality. The British Consul, too, Colonel Etherton, showed me the greatest kindness.

The beautiful gardens of the British Consulate, laid out in the European manner, and the handsome building of the Consulate itself, would have done honour to any place, let alone such a remote hole as Kashgar. For the rest of the European community the British Consulate served as a "window into Europe." Through its wireless we received Reuter's telegrams, and the Consular post brought newspapers up from India, with the latest books and letters. Through it we heard what was going on in the world outside, and now again, thanks to this postal service, I was able to get in touch with friends and correspondents in India and Europe.

In Kashgar I met some Sart traders and merchants whom I had known in Tashkend; like me, they had fled here to escape from the Socialist paradise. They were delighted to see me safe and sound.

To make me forget what I had gone through, all members of the European colony vied with each other in inviting me to teas and dinners and picnics. It was a delightful life of freedom among decent surroundings and educated people, and the old feeling of depression and persecution was gradually ironed away and the demoralisation due to two years' existence dragged out in the "freest country in the world."

It was particularly nice to see this circle of compatriots living here the old Russian life, untouched by the storms and tempests of the revolution, the even tenor of their life scarcely affected. Here in this distant corner of the vast deserts of Central Asia, this oasis of Russian life, feeling and thought still lingered on.

But, of course, I could hardly expect that the Bolsheviks would have failed to try to instil some of their poison even here. Kashgar was necessary to the Bolsheviks as a land of abundance compared with the Russia they had ruined; it was, too, a place where the White Bands of Imperialism, as they called them, could collect and threaten the Communistic fatherland.

In the Russian colony I was introduced to a young woman known as Miss O. Her past was a little murky, but according to her own account she had served in the famous woman's Battalion of Death invented by that strangest of commanders-in-chief, the lawyer Kerensky, as a desperate attempt to save the military might of the Russian Empire which he had done so much to ruin when the armies in the field were disintegrated by German agents with the blessing of the precious Provisional Government. To my astonishment I recognised in her a woman I had known well enough in Tashkend, where she had been the 'friend' of a foreign engineer in the service of the same department during the war where I was a director. He was a clever young man who spoke excellent Russian, as well as English and French and German almost like a native. When I was arrested and thrown into prison by the Bolsheviks, and the participators in the anti-Soviet organisation were obliged to hide in the mountains, a British officer, sent by the British General Staff to Turkestan, was compelled to conceal himself too; incidentally, his remarkable adventures, through which his resourceful boldness brought him safely, form one of the most romantic pages in the history of the struggle with Bolshevism in Turkestan. The engineer, Miss O.'s friend, managed to get hold of the rooms where this Englishman had been staying and made full use of the things he had left behind him. He succeeded in getting out of the country and turned up in his native Belgium, while his 'lady friend' made her way through to Kashgar.

Here she was received with open arms by the Russians, who gave her an excellent post in the Consulate, and arranged for her to give Russian lessons to Chinese officials. Not long after, however, she was caught in the act of stealing some important documents out of the Consular archives and handing them over to the Chinese authorities, and some White officers who were here at the time revealed the fact that she was in touch with the Bolsheviks. She was at once dismissed from the Consulate, and then depended solely on her Chinese pupils.

Of course, I took care not to let her see that I knew whom I was dealing with, and Miss O. kept on questioning me about my friends who had remained in Tashkend, what the 'old generals' were going to do, what the Whites could still do, and so on.

"Take care with Miss O.," a Russian friend whispered to me; "we've good reason to believe she is a Bolshevik spy."

"Don't you worry," I replied, "I can tell a bird by its flight."

In my various conversations with the lady in question, I made no bones about my feelings towards the Soviet authorities and the Bolsheviks and Communists in general, and their accomplice A. F. Kerensky, of whom, to my surprise, she appeared to be a great admirer. I told her that I knew the creature when he was a schoolboy, with all his boasted claims, a hysterical windbag, I said, a mere super, and said that we old Tashkenders ought to blush for our beloved Turkestan for giving such base metal to our poor Russia, but for the fact that at the same time she had given her the hero of the White movement, General Korniloff. In fact, I did not mince my words, but let fly my pent-up wrath, loathing and contempt for the Bolsheviks and their miserable herald who prepared the way for them, and I revelled in it, delighted when I saw the spark of hatred flashing in the eyes of this adventuress.

It was not very long after my arrival that I had an accident which almost cost me my life.

With a few friends, including Colonel Etherton, I was riding along one fine morning out for a picnic organised by our friends of the Swedish Mission. I was riding rather fast and a good way ahead on a Karashar loper or trippler; this breed of horses, as I learnt afterwards, is notorious for the weakness of the fore-legs. We were barely clear of the town and were riding down a narrow dusty lane when suddenly I felt her peck and come down. I tried to hold her up, but it was no good, so I made an effort to throw myself from the saddle to prevent being crushed, as I had more than once done in the past, but was too late. In a moment I was down and my left leg pinned by the horse's flanks. It all happened in a flash, and I felt the whole weight of her body roll over my back.

Cries of horror rang out. I stood up with the greatest difficulty; I felt as though my back was crushed to a pulp; it hurt terribly to breathe, and I could hardly stir.

Six long weeks I lay in bed, under the devoted attention of the Russian doctor, loaded with kindness by the whole Russian colony. I was compelled to lie motionless, as the slightest attempt to move a leg or even an arm brought on an unendurable spasm of fiendish agony. The muscles of the diaphragm were crushed, but, by a great stroke of luck, no bones were broken.

It was a time of the greatest physical and mental suffering. My position seemed absolutely hopeless; all day and all night long I kept thinking of my family and friends, while for the future I could see only the miserable prospect of the life of a helpless cripple. Was it for this that I had endured such risks, privations and labour and exposed my friends to danger too; to reach the object of all my efforts and strivings, only to drag out a miserable existence, a broken man, in a strange land, in a remote corner of Central Asia, without means or resources, or even the ability to work?

When I was in this condition of extreme mental depression and melancholy, yet another unexpected blow fell upon me. The Russian Consulate received urgent notice from the Dao-In to the effect that I was to quit Chinese territory forthwith and return to Soviet Russia, with the threat that, if I refused to go, the order of expulsion would be executed by force.

Sick, broken both physically and morally, crippled and in constant pain, I was now expelled from the land where I thought I had found a refuge from persecution and condemned to be delivered into the hands of my mortal enemies.

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"What is the cause of this change in the attitude of the Chinese authorities?" I asked the person who brought me the bad news.

"For this you are indebted entirely to Miss O.," was the reply, with a bitter smile; "this is the result of her intrigues with the Chinese authorities and she hopes to get jolly well paid for it by the Bolsheviks."

I had scarcely recovered from the shock of this disaster when the Consulate doctor came with a mournful expression on his face with some further evil tidings. By a special decree of the President of the Chinese Republic, all Russian diplomatic institutions in China were annulled. Thus crumbled to the earth my last hope of benefiting by the privilege of the extra-territoriality of our old Russian Consulate.

It is easier to imagine than to describe the tragedy of my situation at that moment and the state of my mind. I knew very well that the Chinese are capable of anything. They are a people to whom the sentiments of sympathy and pity are quite foreign.

What could happen to me next? Where could I go?

The doctor tried to comfort me and persuade me not to lose heart even now.

"Very powerful forces and influential persons are at work on your behalf, and they will not give you up," he said.

And this was true. The order for my expulsion was withdrawn, and I was able to get well, slowly but in peace. Miss O. left Kashgar soon after that for the Far East, to the delight of everybody. The Chinese authorities completely forgot that I had become a resident in Kashgar by unlawful means, and I lived four years in this ancient city as a full-fledged citizen and subject of that strange young republic, where I learnt to feel perfectly at home. I met with nothing but kindness and hospitality on the part of the Chinese officials.

After four years' residence in Chinese Turkestan my circumstances had so much improved that in August 1924 I was able to leave for Europe. My route lay through the highest passes in the world, and the mountain deserts of the Karakorum, Kuen Lung, Western Tibet, the Himalayas and the charming valley of Kashmir and the burning plains of the Punjab.

I hope that I may be able to give an account of my life in Kashgar and the toilsome journey to India through the wild and little known regions of Central Asia.

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